

ESTHER'S OPPORTUNITY

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Text: Esther 4:14

Consider two acorns from the same tree, as nearly alike as possible; plant one on a hill by itself, and the other in the dense forest, and watch them grow. The oak standing alone is exposed to every storm. Its roots reach out in every direction, clutching the rocks and piercing deep into the earth. Every rootlet lends itself to steady the growing giant, as if in anticipation of fierce conflict with the elements.

Sometimes it's upward growth seems in-check for years, but all the while it has been expending its energy in pushing a root across a large rock to gain a firmer anchorage. Then it shoots proudly aloft again, prepared to defy the hurricane. The gales that sport so rudely with its wide branches find more than their match, and only serve still further to toughen every fiber from pitch to bark.

The acorn planted in the deep forest shoots up a weak, tender sapling. Shielded and smothered by its neighbors, it feels no need to spread its roots far and wide for support.

Often we complain or become fearful when challenges come our way. As humans we often prefer to live sheltered lives. We like life to be predictable. However, it is in the times when we are **not** sheltered, but rather called upon to stretch ourselves that we most often find God at work in our lives.

Notice how the *experiences* of Esther gave her the opportunity to see God at work in her live and in the lives of others.

I. ESTHER WAS CHOSEN THROUGH A DIVINE APPOINTMENT (4:14).

A. Only God knows what you and I are capable of doing.

B. Only you and I can choose to answer God's call.

At the spiritual level, planning means taking the initiative. It's not about sitting around until you are absolutely certain God is calling you to a particular task, direction, country, or ministry. Nor is it waiting for the doors to open so you can go there easily. Planning is an act of faith. Jesus never told his disciples to wait for an invitation. He told them to go.

-- Brother Andrew in The Calling. Christianity Today, Vol. 40, no. 8.

II. ESTHER WAS CHALLENGED THROUGH A DIVINE OPPORTUNITY (4:15-16).

A. We are often put in a position where we must take action.

Not long ago at a high school, three military recruiters showed up to address some high school seniors. Graduation was only a few months away, and the military men were there for the obvious--to articulate to these graduating young men and women some of the options that military service would provide them. The meeting was to last forty-five minutes. Each recruiter--representing

Army, Navy, and Marine Corps--was to have fifteen minutes.

Well, the Army and Navy recruiters got carried away. When it came time for the Marine to speak, he had two minutes. So he walked up with two minutes to make his pitch. He stood utterly silent for a full sixty seconds--half of his time. Then he said this:

"I doubt whether there are two or three of you in this room who could even cut it in the Marine Corps. I want to see those two or three immediately in the dining hall when we are dismissed." He turned smartly and sat down. When he arrived in the dining hall, those students interested in the Marines were a mob. They acted without delay. He appealed to the heroic dimension in every heart.

-- W. Frank Harrington, "It's Decision Time," Preaching Today, Tape No. 162.

B. We are challenged to venture into the unknown and attempt what we have never attempted before.

President Theodore Roosevelt said, "It is not the critic who counts, not the person who points out where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the person who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes up short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the devotions, and spends himself or herself in a worthy cause; who at best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and at the worst, at least fails while daring greatly; so that his or her place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory or defeat.

--James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988) p. 131.

III. ESTHER BECAME A CHAMIPION THROUGH A DIVINE INTERVENTION (7:1-10).

A. God would intervene, but only if Esther would risk stepping out.

Some one said,

To laugh is to risk appearing the fool.

To weep is to risk appearing sentimental.

To reach out for another is to risk involvement.

To expose feelings is to risk exposing our true self.

To place your ideas, your dreams, before the crowd is to risk loss.

To love is to risk not being loved in return.

To live is to risk dying.

To hope is to risk despair.

To try at all is to risk failure.

But risk we must, because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing. The man, the woman, who risks nothing does nothing, has nothing, is nothing.

--James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988) p. 129.

B. God had orchestrated the situation, but He would not force her to participate.

Max Lucado wrote, "If there are a thousand steps between us and God, he will take all but one. He will leave the final one for us. The choice is ours."

-- Max Lucado, Leadership, Vol. 17, no. 2.

CONCLUSION

When I was a young writer with a very uncertain income, *writes James S. Hewett*, I went into a quiet park to contemplate a serious problem. For four years I had been engaged but didn't dare to marry. There was no way of foreseeing how little I might earn in the next year; moreover, we had long cherished a plan of living and writing in Paris, Rome, Vienna, London—everywhere. But how could we go three thousand miles away from everything that was familiar and secure, without the certainty of some money now and then?

At that moment I looked up and saw a squirrel jump from one high tree to another. He appeared to be aiming for a limb so far out of reach that the leap looked like suicide. He missed—but landed, safe and unconcerned, on a branch several feet lower. Then he climbed to his goal, and all was well. An old man sitting on the bench said, "Funny, I've seen hundreds of 'em jump like that, especially when there are dogs around and they can't come down to the ground. A lot of 'em miss, but I've never seen any hurt in trying." Then he chuckled. "I guess they've got to risk it if they don't want to spend their lives in one tree." I thought, A squirrel takes a chance--have I less nerve than a squirrel? We were married in two weeks, scraped up enough money for our passage and sailed across the Atlantic—jumping off into space, not sure what branch we'd land on. I began to write twice as fast and twice as hard as ever before. And to our amazement we promptly soared into the realm of respectable incomes. Since then, whenever I have to choose between risking a new venture or hanging back, those five little words run through my thoughts: "Once there was a squirrel --" And sometimes I hear the old man on the park bench saying, "They've got to risk it if they don't want to spend their lives in one tree."

--James S. Hewett, *Illustrations Unlimited* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988) pp. 128-129.

The experiences of our lives often offer us opportunities to see God at work in our lives in a great way. How we respond to these opportunities will determine what we see happen in our lives.

