

# Esther 4:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And came even before the king's gate: for none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.

## Analysis

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**And came even before the king's gate: for none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.** Mordecai came to the king's gate—his normal workplace (2:19, 21; 3:2-3)—but couldn't enter due to mourning garments. Palace protocol forbade sackcloth within royal precincts, maintaining an aura of celebration and prosperity around the king. This detail is poignant: Mordecai's position at the gate gave him access and influence, but in his hour of greatest need, he was excluded. The restriction also prevented direct communication with Esther—he couldn't enter to inform her personally. This forced reliance on intermediaries and indirect communication, creating the narrative tension of how Esther would learn of the crisis. God's providence works even through palace protocols and communication barriers.

## Historical Context

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Ancient Near Eastern palaces maintained strict decorum codes. Mourning garments, expressing sorrow or distress, were prohibited near the king—whose presence supposedly embodied joy, prosperity, and divine favor. Only positive, celebratory attitudes were permitted. This protocol served ideological purposes (projecting royal power and divine favor) and practical ones (preventing mourning from spreading anxiety or undermining morale). The restriction meant Mordecai's message to Esther required messengers and could not include face-to-face conversation. This communication barrier heightened drama and delayed Esther's full understanding of the crisis.

## Related Passages

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**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

## Study Questions

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1. How does the palace protocol excluding mourners illustrate how institutional rules can prevent urgent truths from reaching those in power?
2. What does this barrier teach about how God's providence works through and around human obstacles to communication?

## Interlinear Text

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וָא	אֵין	כִּי	הַמֶּלֶךְ	שֶׁ	עַד	לִפְנֵי	וָא
<b>And came</b>			<b>into the king's</b>	<b>gate</b>		<b>even before</b>	<b>And came</b>
H935			H4428	H8179		H6440	H935
אֶל	שֶׁ	עַד	הַמֶּלֶךְ	בְּלִבּוֹ	וְשֶׁ	שָׂק:	
H413	<b>gate</b>		<b>into the king's</b>	<b>clothed</b>		<b>with sackcloth</b>	
	H8179		H4428	H3830		H8242	