INTRODUCTION: The lives of Mordecai and Esther are an inspiration to Christians living in today's world. We need to be strong and courageous like they were in the face of evil. We must stand against those who seek to purge America of her Christian heritage and moral values.

Judge Paul Pressler was in the midst of the struggle for biblical inerrancy in the Southern Baptist Convention between the moderates and conservatives. The battle lasted for decades. The author tells the story of the Battle that changed the Southern Baptist Convention forever.

In the preface of the book, A Hill To Die On, Judge Pressler wrote: "Why would a person give up personal comfort and ease to become involved in a distasteful and bitter conflict that would impact his entire life? Some have difficulty accepting the fact that a person might simply have convictions which are so strong that he or she must stand for them. I truly believe that Jesus Christ is 'the way, the truth, and the life' and that 'no man cometh unto the Father but by Him.' (John 14:6) Believing this, I had no option but to stand for what I know to be the truth. If you love a person, you must tell that person what you know to be true and what has meant everything to you. Not to share and not to make sure others have a chance to know the truth would be an unloving act of callous disregard."

The book of Esther is about a young Jewish girl being chosen as queen by King Ahasuerus. She was an orphan who was raised by her cousin Mordecai. He learned of the attempt of the wicked Haman to destroy all the Jews.

The only hope for the Jews was for Esther to approach the king and plea for her people. In 4:11, we are told of the danger Esther was in to come before king Ahasuerus without her being summoned. It could mean death if the king failed to extend his golden scepter to her. Mordecai's words gave Esther courage. "And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" The loss would be great if Esther faltered. Esther counted her personal cost and took her stand. Her courage and commitment saved her people.

As Christians in America, we may not be facing the danger of extermination, but we are at a crossroad in our society. If we are not willing to take up our cross daily and follow Christ, it will mean the spiritual collapse of our nation and multitudes of people being lost for eternity. We need to count the cost like Esther and say, "If I perish, I perish." Peter said, "For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing." (1 Peter 3:17 KJV)

Jesus said, "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." (Matthew 5:13)

The evangelist Billy Sunday used to tell of a professing Christian who got a job in a lumber camp that had the reputation of being very ungodly. A friend, hearing that the man had been hired, said to him, "If those lumberjacks ever find out you're a Christian, you're going to be in for a hard time!" The man responded, "I know, but I need the job!"

The next morning he left for camp. A year later, he came home for a visit. While in town, he met his friend who asked, "Well, how did it go? Did they give you a hard time because you're a Christian?"
"Oh no, not at all," the man replied. "They didn't give me a bit of trouble—they never even found out!" ("Our Daily Bread," 11/83.)
The moral collapse of our nation is due in a large part because too many Christians have lost their saltiness. They are good for nothing when it comes for the cause of Christ. It is past time for the Christians of today to strengthen up, stand up, and speak up for the things of God.

**Conservative Clarence Thomas**, the U.S. Supreme Court justice, said in his May 14 commencement speech at Hillsdale College."Do not hide your faith and your beliefs under a bushel basket, especially in this world that seems to have gone mad with political correctness."

**Undercover Boss**
Sherry and I watched Undercover Boss on May 15, 2016 on the CBS channel 7. We usually enjoy the program. We didn't enjoy it, but it was eye opening about the culture we are living in.

Ashley and Brandon Wright are identical twin brothers who are both gay, and they are co-owners of Hamburger Mary's. They went undercover to perform separate jobs in their LGBT-friendly restaurants. Hamburger Mary’s restaurants serve gourmet burgers and alcoholic drinks in addition to having drag shows and nightly entertainment.

What must Christians do to turn the tide of moral depravity?

**I. STRENGTHEN UP**
Paul stated "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." (Ephesians 6:10) As soldiers in the Lord's army, we have to be prepared to face our enemies. We need to be strong in the Lord. We must trust in His power to work through us.

**A. FIRM UP YOUR FAITH.**
Our faith must be firm. We strengthen our faith by feeding on the Word of God. Jesus said, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4 KJV) The source of our faith comes from the Word of God. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17 KJV) We are reminded to "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering." (Hebrews 10:23 KJV)

**B. FACE UP TO YOUR FEARS.**
The King James Version says "Fear not" or "Be not afraid" 103 times. Faith does not remove all our fear, but faith does overcome our fears. God is faithful and will never forsake His children. He is with us in our fears. "For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee." (Isaiah 41:13 KJV)

David said: "In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me." (Psalm 56:11 KJV)

Paul gave us this reminder: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:7 KJV)

We are witnessing the boldness of perverse groups. Many of them are not afraid to speak their minds and stand for what they believe. We must not fear those who oppose us.

**C. FOLLOW CLOSE TO YOUR LORD.**
The Lord is the "Good Shepherd" who cares for His sheep. He will lead us in the "paths of righteousness for His name sake." The Lord is with us when we walk "through the valley of the shadow of death." The path of life may lead us to face many challenges in today's culture. Some of those challenges will be with people who disagree with us on moral issues. Others will simply hate us because we are Christians. If we are following the Lord, He will be with us every step of the way for He "shall direct thy paths." (Proverbs 3:5-8)
We are in a spiritual battle with Satan, his demons and the world's system of beliefs. (Ephesians 6:12) We need the power of the Spirit and the armor of God to fight in this spiritual battle. The Word of God is our weapon against these spiritual forces. (Ephesians 6:17) As David stood before Goliath, He said, "the battle is the LORD'S." Jesus will lead us into battle and on to victory if we will follow Him.

II. STAND UP

A. BE COUNTED AMONG THE GODLY.

It is true that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3:12 KJV) It is just as true what the psalmist said: "But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself." (Psalm 4:3 KJV)

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." (Psalm 1:1 KJV)

There is the old saying that "birds of the feather flock together." Christian people who share the same morals and biblical beliefs need to stand together. These minority groups have been able to make great advances in their causes because they have stood together.

It is important to be among Christian brothers and sisters. The Bible teaches that "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." (Proverbs 27:17 KJV) As iron sharpens iron so do Christians sharpen each other in the Lord. The writer of Hebrews reminds us of the importance of being counted among God's people. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10:25 KJV) We find strength when we stand together and worship together. Christians need to pray and support each other.

In Ephesians 6:11, Paul reminds us to "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." In verse 13-14 Paul stated again, "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness."

B. BE COURAGEOUS AGAINST THE GODLESS.

The godless don't want to hear about their sin or have their evil exposed for what it is. The godless hate the light because they love the darkness of their sin.

We are called to be lights for God in this world. As followers of God, we are to prove "what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light." (Ephesians 5:10-13)

John the Baptist exposed the sin of king Herod and Herodias. He stood courageous against what was wrong. John the Baptist was beheaded because he stood against their immoral living.

Jeremiah the prophet was told to stand in the gate of the Lord's house and confront the people saying "Amend your ways and your doings." (Jeremiah 7:1-11) It nearly cost Jeremiah his life for speaking up for God.

The Bible gives us many instances of God's people taking courageous stands against the godless. We have to stand up and be counted in our day.
III. SPEAK UP
Judge Clarence Thomas told the 2016 graduates: "At the risk of understating what is necessary to preserve liberty and our form of government, I think more and more that it depends on good citizens discharging their daily duties and their daily obligations." We have Christian duties and obligations to fulfill every day. We need to speak up for the cause of Christ.

A. SPEAK WITH CLARITY.
The apostles were arrested and put in a common prison. An angel of the Lord came by night and opened the prison doors. He brought them out and told them, "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." (Acts 5:20 KJV) We have a message to tell and we must speak it with clarity.

B. SPEAK WITH CONSIDERATION.
The manner in which we speak to those who disagree with us is very important. Christians are to be gracious, loving, and truthful in speaking to those who oppose us. "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." (Colossians 4:5-6 KJV) Christians are to speak the truth in love.

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." (1 Peter 3:15 KJV)

You may be concerned that if you speak your convictions people will not like you. Remember the words of Jesus. "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets." (Luke 6:26 KJV) People didn't like Jesus, but He did the will of the Father.

C. SPEAK WITH CONVICTION.
Dictionaries usually define conviction as a fixed or strong belief. As Christians, we need to have strong beliefs about our faith and values. Our convictions will determine how we will conduct our life. We must speak truth with conviction.

The early disciples believed Jesus was the Son of God and the only Savior of sinners. They were persecuted for their faith in Jesus. They prayed that with all boldness they might speak God's Word. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and they did spoke the Word of God with boldness. (Acts 4:31)

"And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." (Acts 5:42) Their convictions caused many of them to be persecuted and some even died. They made a difference in the world in spreading the gospel.

Howard Hendricks gave this definition of conviction: “A belief is something you will argue about. A conviction is something you will die for!”

We learn some important lessons from the lives of Esther and Mordecai. Here are a few of those lessons:

1) Esther was willing to die for her people. She counted the cost.
2) Esther took a courageous stand and spoke up for her people before the king and Haman.
3) Esther saved her people. For her, it was a hill to die on.
4) Esther and Mordecai were blessed for their actions.

CONCLUSION:
Christians have been compromising with the world too long. The lawlessness and moral collapse in our nation is affecting our lives and families. The battle is raging all around us. Will we stand and speak up like Esther? Jesus was hung on the cross and died for each of us. Are we willing to follow Him regardless of the cost?