

b. As you pray, keep these six qualifications in mind.

- 1) Unconfessed sin hinders prayer. (Psalms 66:18) **"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."**
- 2) We must pray according to God's will. (1 John 5:14-15) **"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."**
- 3) Believing is key to receiving. (Mark 11:24) **"Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."**
- 4) We must be willing to accept "no" for an answer. (2 Corinthians 12:9) **"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."**
- 5) If we do not ask, we will not get. (James 4:2) **"... ye have not, because ye ask not."** However, if we ask to fulfil our lustful desires, God won't grant it (James 4:3).
- 6) We must pray persistently. (Luke 18:1) **"And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;"**

Conclusion: God answered prayer for Esther, her maidens, Mordecai, and the Jews of Shushan. They were asking God for the very thing that He desired. Discovering God's mind before we pray, and then praying in His will is a key to receiving the things we request.

God does answer prayer today, but we must pray right. Have your prayers met the six prayer qualifications we just noted? If not, I want to urge you to make the needed adjustments!

If you have not yet trusted Christ as your Saviour, you are not yet a child of God and have no access to Him in prayer. Why not humbly trust Christ to save your soul today!

Song: What a Friend We have in Jesus, **354**

Answered Prayer in Shushan

29 October 2023 AM – Text: Esther 7 – Topic: Prayer – Series: Est23

Introduction: Though Haman was ruffled, and bit concerned after being forced to parade Mordecai around the city to honour him, he joined the king and Queen Esther for the second banquet.

The king again asked Esther to share with him her request. Likely, after uttering a silent prayer and taking a deep breath, Esther spoke. Read Esther 7:3-4.

The king, in anger, said, **"Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?"** I wonder what Haman was thinking about then? Was he beginning to squirm?

Boldly, now, Queen Esther, perhaps pointing at Haman said, **"The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman."** If Haman was not sweating before, he is now.

The king rose up from the banquet in wrath and went out into the palace garden, presumably to decide what he should do to Haman.

In a last effort to spare his life, Haman fell down before Queen Esther and begged for mercy. Her bed was an ornate couch used for reclining during feasting. They did not sit around tables as in our culture.

When the king returned and saw Haman leaning over Esther's bed, his wrath increased. He assumed that Haman was attacking or treating his queen immorally. Hearing the king's angry words, in accord to Persian custom, his servants quickly covered Haman's face so that the angry king could no longer see his face. ^{Gill}

Harbonah, one of the king's chamberlains (i.e., a eunuch court official), suggested that he hang Haman on the 23-metre-high gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king (v.9). The king ordered it to be done. On that very day, Haman died, and the king calmed down.

In the Bible fasting and prayer are generally like Siamese twins; they are inseparable. Therefore, we assume that Esther, her maidens, Mordecai, and the Jews in Shushan had prayed and fasted much before she spoke her request to the king. If so, then each of these events was in answer to prayer.

Transition: As we reflect on the prayer and fasting leading up to this final banquet, we see in this chapter at least three specific answers to the prayers of Esther, her maidens, Mordecai, and the Jews in Shushan. Our God who answered those prayers still answers prayer today.

The first specific answer to prayer is that ...

1. Esther Received Courage and Favour.

a. Making her request was a fearful thing to do.

- 1) Though she was queen, Esther did not have a tender loving relationship with her husband. She was his disposable property. She was at his mercy. Thus, she prepped her words with *“If I have found favour”* and *“If it please the king”*.
- 2) The king did not yet know that Esther was a Jew. How would he respond to this news?
- 3) Haman was the king’s favourite prince. What if Haman spoke up against Esther?

b. God gave her courage and the king’s favour.

- 1) With God’s help, she courageously overcame her fear and presented her request to the king.
- 2) By God’s grace, the king did favour her and sought to defend her (v.5).
- 3) God was answering prayer.

The second specific answer to prayer is that ...

2. Ahasuerus had Compassion and Discernment.

a. He removed his last queen for contempt.

- 1) If the king would have viewed Esther’s request with anger, she could have lost her position or even her life.
- 2) In those days, life in the king’s court was like walking on eggshells. If the king was in a bad mood, your life was at risk.

b. God caused him to favour Esther and reject Haman.

- 1) As we examine the character and personality of King Ahasuerus, we find him to be hot-tempered, changeable, unpredictable, proud, and lacking discernment.
- 2) His reaction to Esther’s request indicates that God was working in his heart. He showed favour to Esther. He

treated her as precious. He went into the garden to ponder before reacting. Ultimately, he sided against his highest prince. These were reactions prompted by God in answer to prayer.

The third specific answer to prayer is that ...

3. Haman Received Justice and Execution.

a. No doubt, he begged for mercy, but got justice.

- 1) We do not know what Esther and the Jews had been praying about Haman, but likely, they begged God to remove his influence.
- 2) Esther did not fearfully back down when Haman begged for his life. He had plotted to exterminate the Jews because of his hatred for Mordecai who would not bow to his wishes.
- 3) Seeing Haman on the Queen’s couch, the king blew his top and condemned Haman to death. With this, his court servants quickly covered Haman’s head.

b. God caused Harbonah to suggest the gallows.

- 1) We know nothing about Harbonah other than that he was a eunuch chamberlain in the king’s court. Perhaps he was a Jewish slave. Whoever he was, he disliked Haman and told the king of the gallows Haman had built on which to hang good Mordecai.
- 2) At the king’s command, Haman was hanged on that very gallows as soon as possible. What a turn of events!
- 3) God was answering prayer!

4. God still answers prayer today!

a. His answer may be “No”, “Wait”, or “Yes”, but He does answer.

- 1) In all prayer, God wants us to seek His will. When we desire what He desires, He delights to give us our requests. Keep this in mind when you read prayer promises like, (John 16:23) **“And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.”**
- 2) Jesus gave us an example to follow when He prayed, **“Not my will, but thine, be done.”** (Luke 22:42).