Greetings to all in the name of Jesus our Lord!

I invite you to find something you are grateful for today and spend some time praising God for it. He provides all we have and He is good. It is so easy in this life to forget the good things we have. In our current times, it is so easy to focus on all the bad things that are happening and miss the kindnesses of God.

Praising God for what He has provided is not only the right thing to do, but it is good for us. Being able to praise God is also a gift He has given us. When we take the time to think on His gifts and praise Him for them, we receive peace within ourselves. There are benefits for us in worship and thanksgiving, both in this life and in the life to come.

*Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*

 Philippians 4:8-9

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Esther 7

Earlier that day, Haman had gone to king Ahasuerus in order to have Mordecai impaled on a stake seventy-five feet high. In God’s providence, the tables were turned on Haman and he ended up publicly giving Mordecai high honor; at the expense of his own. His wife and friends came to the startling conclusion that because Mordecai was a Jew, Haman would fall before him. With all this on his mind, he went to join Queen Esther and King Ahasuerus at a second banquet.

Haman has been a study for us on pride and arrogance throughout this account. We know that pride comes before a fall and will lead to destruction. We have seen God humble Haman (although he still hasn’t learned anything), but God isn’t done yet. Haman has cursed God’s chosen people; the people God has brought specially to Himself. Haman’s destruction is coming, but we can learn one more thing about pride: it causes blindness.

There is a glaring question that Haman should have been asking himself, “Why was he invited to a banquet Esther had prepared for the king?” And even more, “Why had he been invited to a second one immediately following the first?” We know the answer; but Haman should have wondered. Instead, his pride was such that it never occurred to him that he shouldn’t be there. His pride had blinded him; he couldn’t see that something else was going on.

When we are proud, it can get in the way of seeing what is really going on in a situation. It can cause us to miss something important. Consequently, we end up in a lot of trouble because we didn’t see things clearly. For example, someone who is proud of how much money they make, might be more easily fooled into thinking they can afford something that they really can’t. A person with a lot of power may arrogantly try to push around someone else, only to find out that person has more power than they do. Our lives will be so much better if we avoid pride; our eyes stay open for traps so that we don’t fall into them.

The small group is drinking wine after the banquet and Ahasuerus asks for the third time what it is that Esther desires. And for the third time, promises to provide whatever it is. Once again, Esther’s speech is humble and deferring to the king. She begins “*If I have found favor in your sight, O King, and if it pleases the king …*”

We have a king; His name is Jesus. And He is one with God the Father who is also king. Here is a wonderful thing for us to know. Because we are Christians; because we have accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour; we have found favor in the sight of the King. This should instill awe in us. The almighty God of the universe is pleased with us. Because of the work of Jesus on the cross, our sins are forgiven, we are covered with His perfect righteousness, and we can come before the King at any time. We do not have to hope for Him to extend the golden scepter; He will accept us when we come into His presence.

This is, of course, only for those who have believed on Jesus for salvation and there is no other way. God is right and just in this. He sacrificed His only begotten Son; it is absolutely right that God require belief in Jesus as the requirement for salvation. All of us were doomed to hell because all of us sin and sin must be paid for. Many choose to pay the price themselves through unbelief. But those of us who come to understand what Jesus did and accept the gift of salvation He offers, have favor before the King and can stand before Him guiltless.

The next part is also important, “*if it pleases the King*”. There are many promises in the Bible that God hears prayers and answers them. Even as Ahasuerus offered up to half of his kingdom, God offers far beyond what we can imagine and has the power and authority to grant whatever we ask. But, the part about pleasing the King is crucial. We must ask according to God’s will.

Far to often we ask for things according to our own will. Unfortunately, there are many false teachers out there today, that falsely present these promises as if we can get anything we want. According to them, God is simply a benevolent Being that grants wishes. This is not God. This is a false use of Scripture. God will give us good things, but they must be according to His will; according to His plans for all creation. James tells us in chapter 4 verse 3:

*You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.*

James tells us to not waste our time asking for lots of money so we can buy expensive toys; for a big house so we can impress our neighbors; for a promotion at work so we can boss others around or have a big office. The problem with all these things is that they are carnal. When we desire things like this, our focus is on the things of this earth, not on the things of God. As we have talked about before, our focus must be on eternity and giving glory to God.

Yes, we can ask for finances if we truly need it. We can ask for material possessions that are necessary in this life; a home to live in, a car for transportation, a job so we can survive and provide. We can ask for good health and cure for disease. We can ask for these things because God loves us and likes to provide for His children. But for our part, we must be accepting of His answer. God may provide exactly what we ask for. He may provide for our needs, but in some completely different way. He may answer us with a “no”.

What we must always remember as Christians, is that God must get the glory. In what ever way He answers our prayers, that is the way He will be glorified. Even though it may be difficult, Christians must rejoice in the answers God provides. We can trust Him with everything. He will be glorified by the answers He gives to prayer; and ultimately, it will work out for the best for us. It is our place to pray in faith until we have an answer, be it yes or no, and then praise Him.

Additionally, the Bible gives us things that are definitely according to God’s will. Because it is God’s desire that no-one eternally perish, we pray for the salvation of others. Jesus taught us to pray for the Kingdom of Heaven to come, so it is right for us to pray for its arrival. It is always good to pray specially for God’s people; both the chosen nation of Israel and for our Christian brothers and sisters. The Lord’s Prayer is a good example of things to pray for. We must pray that God is honored in everything that we do.

Once Ester has humbly appealed to the king, she drops a bomb shell. Certainly, King Ahasuerus would have been wondering what his queen may have wanted. Perhaps she wanted a better living quarters or more attendants. Maybe a piece of the kingdom to rule herself. But would any of these be worth risking her life for? The king must have wondered greatly. Haman most likely has some idle curiosity, but he was too concerned about himself to really care. He may have thought that there would be some way to advance himself and have the favor of the pretty queen. Neither of them was ready for what Esther asked for.

Esther asked for her life. She let the king know that she had been sentenced to die. She also asked for the life of her people. Not only was she to die, but all the people of her nationality. She made things very clear when she repeated the words that had been used in the edict that Haman has sent out: *to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated*. Once more, she was humble before the king. She told him that even if she was to be sold into slavery, she would have remained silent, because it wouldn’t have been worth bothering the king. The interesting thing about that, is that surely the king would have been very unhappy if his wife had been taken from him and made a slave. But she lets him know that she respects the king and his time.

What a sight that must have been. Imagine the expression on the king’s face as he finds out that his wife was sentenced to death in his own kingdom and he had no idea what was going on. Imagine the expression on Haman’s face: as Esther talked, it would have slowly dawned on him what she was referring to. With horror, he would have realized that she was a Jew and that he had sentenced King Ahasuerus’s wife to death, with an irrevocable edict.

In verse 5, the king wants to know who has done this. The Hebrew in this verse indicates that King Ahasuerus was sputtering. He started and stopped his question a couple of times before he got it out. He was completely caught off guard and was also a man of quick temper; these things, coupled with the wine, made it hard to get his mouth and mind coordinated.

Esther was quick to lay the blame squarely on Haman. It was important for her to do this, because in reality, the king was just as much to blame as Haman was. He is the one who gave Haman the authority to make and enforce the edict. Understandably, Haman was terrified before the king and queen.

Along with pride, desire for revenge is natural for us as fallen human-beings. Haman had wanted revenge on Mordecai for not bowing to him. He wasn’t satisfied with just getting Mordecai, he wanted to get all his people too. The Bible warns us about revenge: we are, flat out, not to seek revenge. This does not mean that we let someone get by with breaking the law. By reporting a crime, we are helping to maintain a civil society. This does not mean that we can’t use legal means to obtain reparation for loss someone has caused us. The difference would be trying to obtain what we are due, as opposed to trying to get someone for everything we can.

The reason we must avoid revenge is because it belongs to God alone. Paul reminds us in Romans 12:19, “*Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord*.” We leave vengeance to God because He truly knows what is going on. We might misread someone’s actions because we don’t know their heart like God does. If we leave it to God, our lives and minds can be free of concern for the actions of others. In the end, any revenge that we take will never match what God can do.

Ahasuerus stormed out of the room and into the garden. He had to have time to think. He didn’t have to think about severely punishing Haman; Haman could already see that he had determined harm for him. Ahasuerus had to think because he would have realized that, even though Esther had only blamed Haman, he was also guilty of the edict. How could he punish Haman for the same crime he himself had committed? His answer came when he returned from the garden.

In desperation and panic, Haman saw the queen as his last hope. All his pride and arrogance were gone as he *begged* the queen for his life. All the honor that he had sought were worthless now. All his riches could buy him nothing. How important it is for us to store up treasure in heaven, where moths will not eat and thieves will not break in and steal. Heavenly treasure will be there waiting for us when we arrive and we will never lose it. Rather give honor to God than take it ourselves; that is a true treasure.

As the king reenters the room, he sees Haman falling on the couch with Esther. In his haste, did he trip and fall? Or in a blind panic did he prostrate himself in hopes of mercy? We don’t know; but the king saw and said, “*Will he even assault the queen with me in the house*?” Ahasuerus had his reason to pronounce the death penalty upon Haman. It is interesting to note that his death was brought about by a false accusation. In the same way, with false accusation, he had brought about the edict for the destruction of the Jews.

Harbonah was a gutsy character. He had been with the king for a long time; he was one of the eunuchs who had been sent for queen Vashti back in the first chapter. You can imagine Haman, in all his arrogance, treating the king’s servants with contempt. Who knows what Harbonah had endured from Haman. Harbonah took his chance for revenge. It was not right for him to take revenge, but again, God can even use sinful people to work out his plan.

Harbonah provided all the necessary details. “Hey look! There is a gallows 75 feet tall right at Haman’s house.” He let the king know that Haman himself had built it to impale Mordecai on. The very Mordecai that had saved the king’s life. That was what the king needed and he issued the command, “*Hang him on it*.” Haman ended up suffering the fate that he had prepared for Mordecai.

Haman played games with an earthly king and got caught; he had to pay the price. There is a heavenly king who is very real and all-powerful. Too many people play games with Him. They rebel, they ignore Him, they go about their lives in complete disregard for His goodness and power. Those who refuse to believe on Jesus Christ are already caught; the King will issue a command and their fate will be sealed for eternity.

Even we who are Christian must remember that He is God. We gratefully accept His grace and mercy and love, but we must not presume upon it. We must not take it for granted. We cannot sin simply because we know we are forgiven. Our sins were paid for by the blood of His Son, Jesus. We must hate sin as He does. God loves us more than we can know; love Him back with gratefulness and humble obedience.

Prayer

Almighty God, we confess and proclaim Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be the only way to come to You. He was willing to pay the penalty for our sins; a penalty more horrible than anything we can think of. Yet He freely did this that we can be with You, almighty God, forever.

We also confess our sin. Even as believers in Christ, we fail in righteousness and goodness. Thank You, that these sins, too, are covered by the sacrifice Jesus made. We ask that Your Holy Spirit continually remind us to not presume on what Jesus has done. Strengthen us to resist sin, that we may be pleasing to You.

Praise to You, Lord God, creator of all things. The universe is in Your hands and under Your guidance. Help us that we remain in Your will and be useful to You in this life.

We pray these things in Jesus’ name

Amen