

Gaining An Audience With The King: Prevailing Prayer

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I want to share a story with you, friends, before I begin my message. There was an itinerant preacher who was passing through the city of St. Louis on a Sunday morning and he had decided to park his car at a downtown church to have his Sabbath worship and he took a seat at the back of the church and when he did, he realized he was the only white person in that all black church. Up on the platform was the elderly pastor giving his message on heaven and he began his message by saying, "Some folks call heaven paradise, other folks see it as Abraham's bosom. Let me tell you how I see heaven, here is Jesus just entering the Pearly Gates after his earthly mission and Gabriel greets him, 'Hello, Jesus. Sure is good to see you, Jesus. Welcome home, Jesus. But who is that with you there, Jesus? Is that that thief, that thief on the cross? Why, he can't come I here. Heaven is no place for thieves. No sir, he can't come in here.' Just then, Jesus puts his arm around the thief and hugs him and replies, 'Never you mind, Gabriel, never you mind. He's with me.'"

I like that story, don't you, friends? And I begin my message with that story because I'm speaking on prayer today and there are different views out there on just what prayer is. Some folks say prayer is a battlefield where you pray with intensity and fervency as if in a hand-to-hand combat with the enemy and you put on the armor of God and duke it out with the devil. Other folks say prayer is a courtroom where God is the judge and you enter that courtroom with your legal briefs under your arms and stand on legal ground and demand to be heard as you present your case to the judge. Let me tell you how I see prayer from what I have gathered out of my worn out Bible through the years. I have spent a lot of time in prayer through the years, friends, and God has seen pleased to develop a prayer life in me that comes from a deep well of experience of walking with God all these years and I want to share what I've learned with you about a life of intimate prayer with him and I believe my Bible says that prayer isn't so much fought on a battlefield and it isn't so much argued out in a courtroom, but rather prayer is petitioned in a royal throne room where you gain the audience with the King.

And that's what prevailing prayer is, friends, and I want to illustrate my point with my text found in the book of Esther 8. You can turn in your Bibles there now, friends. We will be in verses 3 through 8. I'm sure all of you are quite familiar with the story of Queen Esther and her bold petition presented to her king, Ahasuerus, which is the

Hebrew form of the name Xerxes, King of Persia. Did you know, friends, that his official title of Emperor actually means King of kings? Are you seeing where I'm going with this? Follow along and you will soon find out.

The title of my message today, friends, is "An Audience With The King: Prevailing Prayer," and if you pay attention to this message on prayer, friends, I promise you you will leave here with a better understanding of how to pray more effectively to gain an audience with the King of kings.

Allow me to read us this striking passage of Scripture at this time and I want you to visualize this tender scene of Queen Esther and how she approaches her king. I don't believe there's a better picture found in my Bible than this passage in Esther of how we should approach God in prayer. It's a textbook pattern, friends, and if you want to have a deeper, richer, more effective, hell-bending and heaven-storming prayer life, then pay attention as we proceed and it is my prayer that the Holy Spirit will be pleased to attend the reading of God's holy word.

3 And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews. 4 Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood before the king, 5 And said, If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in all the king's provinces: 6 For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred? 7 Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews. 8 Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse.

Now, there are several aspects I'd like to draw out from our passage, friends, as they pertain to how we approach God in prayer. Actually, there are eight principles laid out here in our text which pertain to prayer.

The first principle is this, notice how in verse 3, the text reads, "And Esther spake yet again before the king." This speaks of importunity with God in prayer. It is the "yet again" that demonstrates how persistent we are in bringing our petitions before the Almighty. Do some of us give up in prayer after we see no answer? Do we cease to pray because we grow tired? I remember years ago how a group of pastors asked me to meet with them on a regular basis to pray for revival and how each week we would gather to pray and at first the number of pastors came to about eight men, but those numbers

dropped off after a while to where we only had three men left who were willing to gather to pray for revival. The others made excuses why they could not come. Finally after months of prayer, the three remaining men fell away as well. But God, friends, delights in his children's persistence in prayer in approaching him. Importunity grips the attention of God like few other things. Did you know that? So we must ask ourselves: do we have the "yet again" as a dynamic in our prayer life? Do we persist in prayer faithfully with unceasing importunity? This delights God and brings deliverance to us, friends.

Next, the second aspect and principle I want to bring before you today concerning prayer is found in verse 3 as well. Notice the text says of Esther, "and fell down at his feet." This represents humility before God in prayer. Psalm 51:17 says, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." How many times have I sat and heard the prayers of self-conceited men pray careless prayers in meetings that when they pray, it's obvious to all there that here is a person who is not praying for the ears of God but for the ears of men. He wants to impress men with his prayers. Pride is a very ugly sin, my dear friends, and pride is the testable to a holy God. God declares in Proverbs, "pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate." God hates pride in prayer. Esther is a wise queen and she knows how to approach her king and gain favor with him.

Notice again, the text describes her posture in prayer, "and fell down at his feet." Humility and a contrite heart is the pathway to prayer, friends. Oh, that each of us would go through such a self-emptying process that we would gain a more powerful prayer life with the Almighty. J. Sidlow Baxter used to say, "How can a man full of himself preach the Christ who emptied himself," and the same can be applied to our prayer life, friends so we have these elements of prayer: importunity and humility.

Now let us proceed to the next principle which is: desperation in prayer. Look at verse 3 again where it says, "and besought him with tears." This speaks of anguish of Esther's heart, the holy desperation she demonstrates in prayer with her hot tears. Oh, dear friends, if only the church could once again be a house of prayer rather than a house of entertainment; rather than the booming sound of drums and electric guitars in the sanctuary there would be the sound of weeping from the broken-hearted saints on their faces before God in desperate prayer weeping over the sins of the land, weeping over this ruined generation of godless teenagers. Oh, how we need to be people of desperate prayer. God hears desperate anguished prayer. If you want a pathway to the heart of God, friend, then meet him with your broken heart and weeping eyes in prayer. How can we call ourselves church if the carpet in the sanctuary isn't wet from the tears of the people of God? Let me ask you: when you pray, are your eyes dry? This is sometimes a barometer to your fervency and effectualness in prayer. She besought him with tears. A holy and compassionate God cannot help but to cup his ear and lean over to listen to the heart cries of his broken-hearted children.

Now, let us look at the fourth principles of prayer which is: to thwart the power of the devil through prayers. Surely evil Haman is a picture of evil Satan. Satan is a destroyer, a deceiver. Notice in verse 3 how it states, "to put away the mischief of Haman the

Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews." Listen to me, friends, and listen to me very carefully: Satan has real devices aimed at you to destroy both you and your testimony before men and your service to God. Satan would desire to destroy your life as well if you open enough opportunities in your life through disobedience and sin and give him a foothold in your life. I've seen this happen where a professed believer falls into apostasy and is removed by sudden death. Wicked Haman wanted to eliminate the Jews; he wanted to wipe out the people of God and destroy them. Satan's devices and all of hell's artillery is aimed at the on fire believer who lives for Christ and his Gospel. If you tend to go all out for God, friend, then be prepared to be under attack from the enemy of our souls. And if you do not know how to pray rightly, then you are not praying as effectively as you can against this evil entity who hates God and all things holy, and who hates the followers of Jesus Christ with a burning hatred. Peter warns us in his epistle, "Be sober and be vigilant because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

Now, let us look at this fifth principle in prayer which is: gaining the ear of God or gaining an audience with the King. Notice the wording in verse 4, "Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther." This speaks of God's favor, friends. " So Esther arose and stood before the king." Here is the attainment of her importunate, desperate petitions. She found and gained an audience with the king. She has his full and undivided attention and she stands in his presence as an accepted offering. She is ready to now do business with the king in his royal throne room. Imagine yourself being brought into the royal chamber of a king and having access to that king and being accepted by that king and standing there in his mighty presence with his full and undivided attention. So here this fifth principle in prayer is that prayer has an objective and that objective is to get an audience with God for the pathway to prayer leads to the throne room of the King of kings. There he sits in all power and majesty and authority.

Now I want us to see the sixth principle of prayer and that is: praying in accordance with the will of God. Look, if you will, friends, at verse 5, "If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king." Listen, friends, to have an answer to our prayers, they must be in complete alignment with the will of God for us. Let me put it this way: God will never give us a thing in answer to prayer if it's hurtful to us from his perspective. A little child is fascinated with a shiny knife found in the kitchen drawer and wants to play with it, but daddy knows best and takes the knife away from the child before it hurts him. I repeat: God will never give us, in answer to prayer, something that is harmful to us from his perspective. Our prayers must line up with his perfect will so the sixth principle of prayer is: praying in accordance with the will of God. Oh friends, how often we pray amiss here.

Now let us proceed to the seventh principle of prayer and this is found in verse 7. Let me read that to us now. "Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman." This is the exact request that Esther petitioned the king for earlier. The king has answered her request. She has found favor in his sight. She has entered the royal throne room and accomplished her initial desire about receiving what she'd asked for so the seventh principle is attaining the answer to prayer.

Now I want to close with the eighth principle of prayer and that is: when we pray, we are praying to a sovereign King who has all authority and power and is able to perform what we request, for with God all things are possible. Look at verse 8 to see the royal power displayed on behalf of Queen Esther. "Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse." There you have it, friends, when we pray to the Almighty King, we can approach him with the confidence that his word is true and he is true to his word; that our heavenly King has all the mighty power in all the universe to act on our behalf for the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.

I hope we've learned something of value today which will aid us greatly when we pray; that prayer is not so much fought on the battlefield, nor is it so much argued out in a courtroom, but it's petitioned in a royal throne room for there the King of all the earth sits ready to hear our desperate prayers and to give us an audience with him for Jesus Christ is our heavenly Priest and Advocate and he sits at the right hand of the Father and he earned that right by way of a bloody cross. He is the forerunner who has opened the way for us to enter that grand throne room and lay our petitions at the feet of the Most High. We must tread the pathway to prayer via these eight principles: importunity, humility, desperation, knowing our enemy and his desires against us, gaining an audience with the King in accordance to his will, and attaining the answer to those requests and finally, believing God is able to perform and act in our behalf and show himself strong and to bear his arm. Let us pray more often. Let us pray more fervently. Let us pray more expectantly. And let us attain our answers to prayer more frequently now that we know how to approach the King in his royal throne room in the heavenlies.

Let us pray.