

Esther 5
August 22, 2021

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: Within a biblical context, when you hear the word “favor,” what does that mean to you? [Let people engage]

Definition of Favor: Looking kindly upon someone or treating someone with special regard. Scripture stresses the kindness and graciousness of God and Jesus Christ, which is not the result of human merit or achievement.

Scripture References for Favor (28 per Logos 5 Software):

- **Prov 8:35** For whoever finds me finds life and receives favor from the LORD.
- **Prov 12:2** A good man obtains favor from the Lord, but the Lord condemns a crafty man.
- **Isa 60:10** “Foreigners will rebuild your walls, and their kings will serve you. Though in anger I struck you, in favor I will show you compassion.
- **Psalm 5:12** For surely, O Lord, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield.
- **Job 33:26** He prays to God and finds favor with him, he sees God’s face and shouts for joy; he is restored by God to his righteous state.
- **Num 11:15b** If I have found favor in your eyes—and do not let me face my own ruin.”

Transition: You will recall last week that Esther and Mordecai developed a game plan of having all the Jews pray and fast for three days before she would dare to approach King Xerxes. Today is the day that Esther steps out in complete faith in God to present herself to King Xerxes.

She is trusting that through her prayer and fasting, along with all the Jews who joined her in prayer, that she will find FAVOR with God. Esther is looking for the evidence of God’s favor by King Xerxes (see Es 2:9) allowing her to approach him – even though she was not invited by him to appear!

Let’s see how God is at work after three days of prayer and fasting! Let’s begin.

BOOK:

Esther’s Request to the King

5 On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king’s hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance. ² When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter.

³ Then the king asked, “What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you.”

⁴ “If it pleases the king,” replied Esther, “let the king, together with Haman, come today to a banquet I have prepared for him.”

⁵“Bring Haman at once,” the king said, “so that we may do what Esther asks.”

So the king and Haman went to the banquet Esther had prepared. ⁶ As they were drinking wine, the king again asked Esther, “Now what is your petition? It will be given you. And what is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted.”

⁷ Esther replied, “My petition and my request is this: ⁸ If the king regards me with favor and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them. Then I will answer the king’s question.”

Haman’s Rage Against Mordecai

⁹ Haman went out that day happy and in high spirits. But when he saw Mordecai at the king’s gate and observed that he neither rose nor showed fear in his presence, he was filled with rage against Mordecai. ¹⁰ Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home.

Calling together his friends and Zeresh, his wife, ¹¹ Haman boasted to them about his vast wealth, his many sons, and all the ways the king had honored him and how he had elevated him above the other nobles and officials. ¹² “And that’s not all,” Haman added. “I’m the only person Queen Esther invited to accompany the king to the banquet she gave. And she has invited me along with the king tomorrow. ¹³ But all this gives me no satisfaction as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king’s gate.”

¹⁴ His wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, “Have a gallow built, seventy-five feet high, and ask the king in the morning to have Mordecai hanged on it. Then go with the king to the dinner and be happy.” This suggestion delighted Haman, and he had the gallows built.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn’t understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

God is still on His throne in every circumstance of life. His throne represents His sovereignty He is never taken by surprise by the events that happen in our life. Let’s approach His throne of grace boldly and with confidence, knowing that as His child, we have His favor as he works out His purpose for each of us. And no matter what, because He has our best interest at heart, we will trust whatever the outcome is.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (Es 5-6)*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

I. A Feast of Rejoicing (5–6)

The Jews have fasted and prayed with Esther for three days; it is now time to step out by faith and intercede before the king's throne. Keep in mind that Oriental rulers were almost like gods to their people, and their commands, right or wrong, were obeyed. Esther was taking her life in her hands, but she had already put her life into God's hands. No sooner did she appear at the entrance to the throne room than the king lifted his golden scepter and called her in! "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord!" (Prov. 21:1) Acting very wisely, Esther did not immediately tell Xerxes her true request. Instead, she invited him and Haman to a banquet that very day. She knew the king's weakness for food and drink and, with womanly intuition, she prepared him for the important request. Furthermore, she gave Haman a false feeling of security by including him. After several full courses of food, the time would come for the wine course, a time when the king would be exceptionally happy. He knew that Esther had a matter on her heart, so he asked about it. But the wise queen delayed another day, and the king yielded to her wishes. Haman went home elated, puffed up with pride that he should enjoy such an exclusive banquet with royalty. But his peace and security were not to last long; like the lost sinner today, Haman was already under condemnation.

Only one thing ruined the day for Haman: he had to see the Jew Mordecai at the gate, and Mordecai refused to bow down to him. In his proud wrath, Haman decided to trump up some charge against Mordecai and have him executed. Like Adam, Haman listened to his wife and followed her advice. He had a 75-foot gallows erected, intending to have Mordecai hanged from it. The height of the gallows enabled the whole city to see the victim; in fact, in 7:9–10 the servants of the king seem to indicate the gallows could even be seen from the palace. Haman's fleshly rejoicing was not to last long, for in chapter 6 we find Mordecai finally rewarded for saving the king's life. Perhaps Mordecai had been meditating on Ps. 37:1–15; he knew that God would one day honor him for his good deed. But think of how humiliated Haman must have been! This event should have humbled him and forced him to change his wicked plans. In fact, his wife even warned him that now he could not overcome the Jews. While Haman and his wife were discussing the matter, the servant came to take Haman to the second banquet.

Martin, J. A. (1985). *Nahum*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 708) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

1. BANQUET PREPARED (5:1–4)

5:1–4. After the three days of fasting in which **Esther** participated (cf. 4:16) she was ready to go to **the king** with her request. Actually, she went **on the third day** because part of a day was counted as a whole day (cf. comments on Matt. 12:40). Even though she had not been with the king in over a month (Es. 4:11), **he was pleased** that she came (though she had been apprehensive) and **he held out ... the gold scepter toward her** (cf. 4:11; 8:4). He sensed that she had come to request something, so he asked her for her **request**. And he even offered to give her whatever she wanted **even up to half the kingdom** (cf. 5:6; 7:2; Mark 6:23). This apparently was an idiom to express the point that **Esther** could request whatever she desired and that her

wish would be fulfilled. Esther's request was simple: she asked that Xerxes and **Haman come ... to a banquet** she had prepared.

2. SECOND BANQUET PREPARED (5:5–8)

5:5–8. **The banquet** was prepared and **Haman** was told to come as **Esther** had requested. It was an unusual honor to be invited to a banquet with the queen, for Persian officials were protective of their wives. When **the king** asked what she wanted and again promised to fulfill her wish (cf. v. 3; 7:2), **Esther replied** that she would tell him the next day at a second **banquet**. **Why Esther did not relate Haman's plot at the first banquet is not stated.** Perhaps **Esther** was afraid to voice her complaint to **the king**. Perhaps she had second thoughts about telling him at all. Or perhaps she sensed that he was not in the right frame of mind for her to tell him on that day. From a literary standpoint, this delay raises the tension level as the story moves to its climax. A person reading Esther for the first time would be in a high state of agitation as the tension increased. Xerxes' response to Esther's suggestion is not given here, but Haman's later boasting (5:12) shows that **the king** was in obvious agreement with the idea.

3. HAMAN GLOATED, AND BUILT GALLOWS (5:9–14)

5:9–14. **Haman** was euphoric (**happy and in high spirits**) about his sudden good fortune with **the king** and the queen (v. 12) but, in contrast, he was enraged about **Mordecai**, the **Jew**, who still refused to bow down to him (cf. 3:2, 5). Haman was so overwrought about Mordecai that he could not enjoy his good position. On this occasion, to relieve himself of his rage and anxiety about **Mordecai**, he gathered his family and **friends** and spent time boasting about the **wealth** he had amassed and the family he had raised (he had 10 **sons**; 9:7–10, 12). As a social braggart (cf. 6:6) he also reminded them of his promotions in rank in the government, capping it off by telling them that on two successive days he was to be the guest of honor at a private **banquet** with only **the king** and **queen** present. However, he admitted that all his money and fame did not satisfy him because of **Mordecai**.

Haman's **wife, Zeresh, and all his friends** were no better than he was. They suggested that Haman **have a gallows built** that would be **75 feet high** and that he **have Mordecai hanged on it** before the banquet so he would have nothing bothering him when he went to the feast. **The gallows** probably was an impaling stake, a common method of execution in the ancient world (cf. comments on 2:23). The purpose in suggesting such a tall stake was so it would be a lesson to all who saw it. The person on the stake would be visible from all directions, since he would be higher than all the trees. This spectacle would solemnly emphasize that Haman was in control (cf. 3:1) and that no one should try to stand in his way.

Haman undoubtedly felt that with Mordecai gone there would be no organized opposition from the Jewish camp. He would be freed from his enemy forever. Here the tension in the Haman-Mordecai conflict reached its peak. From this point on it was relieved little by little through circumstances that had already been set in motion. As the events unfold, the reader is reminded of seemingly insignificant or forgotten events that the skillful narrator had previously mentioned but had not highlighted. God was sovereignly at work behind even such a hateful act as building a gallow (cf. Acts 2:23; 4:27–28).

Mathews, K. A. (1998). The Historical Books. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (p. 196). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Esther's Banquet (5:1–14). The prayers of God's people were answered because Xerxes received Esther without incident. She invited the king and Haman to a banquet whereupon she would make her request known. Once the guests had enjoyed their fill, Esther wisely delayed her request for another day of feasting—no doubt to heighten the king's interest in the petition.

Haman left in a happy mood, but it was tempered by his fury for “the Jew Mordecai.” Haman boasted of his authority, but these boasts would later turn into tears of humiliation (6:12–13a; 7:7–8a). Haman's friends and family would be repaid with their own lives on the very gallows they had recommended for Mordecai (7:10; 9:14).

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Esther 5:1-14). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

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