



# The Prayer of Queen Esther

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# The Prayer of Queen Esther

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## ESTHER GRANTS JOY TO MANY GENERATION

*(not translated)*

### THE PRAYER OF QUEEN ESTHER

Many people resort to prayer and repentance at the time of distress, especially if one was subjected to the danger of his own death or the death of his people. However, the prayer of Esther reveals unto us what is beyond her words, namely the secret behind her piety, faith, thoughts and life.

This prayer came in the Septuagint version in chapter five of the Book of Esther, while in the Latin Vulgate it came in the Addition to the Book of Esther as an appendix to the Book (chapter 14).

It is the prayer of every believer that truly longs that God would incline His ear to listen to him. God accepts this prayer as a pleasing love sacrifice if it came from a true heart and a serious life.

*Thus, what were the wordings of this prayer and what lay behind it?*

First: A queen that gave no place for the false glory in her heart [Esther 14:16].

Second: A queen whose shelter is God [1].

Third: A rejoicing queen [2].

Fourth: A queen that seizes on the divine promises [3-5].

Fifth: A queen that repents her sins and the sins of her people [6-7].

Sixth: A queen that requests salvation from the deadly fear! [19].

### **First: A Queen that gave No Place for the False Glory in Her Heart**

Esther imbibed from her tutor, Mordecai, the spirit of prayer that comes from a heart that does not hold unto anything; and thus did not seek any false glory or luxurious feasts. She declared in her prayer how much she despised the high estate as a menstruous rag and that she did not esteem the palace or its feasts, but only the LORD.

“She laid away her glorious apparel, and put on the garments of anguish and mourning; and instead of precious ointments, she covered her head with ashes and dung, and she humbled her body greatly, and all the places of her joy she filled with her torn hair” [Esther 14:2].

“You know that I hate the glory of the unrighteous, and abhor the bed of the uncircumcised, and of all the heathen” [15].

“You know my necessity, for I abhor the sign of my high estate, which is upon my head (the royal crown) in the days wherein I show myself, and that I abhor it as a menstruous rag, and that I wear it not when I am private by myself” [16].

“And that I have not eaten at Aman's table, and that I have not greatly esteemed the king's feast, nor drunk the wine of the drink offerings” [17].

As a queen she was committed to show herself in a certain appearance that is fit to her position with all its greatness, high estate and glory; yet with all her inner self she despised these earthly false matters.

**1. *She hates the glory of the unrighteous:*** When she observed that the royal palace was ruled by the law of unjustness in favor of the king and his retainers, she despised that law that contradicts the Law of the LORD.

St. Paul warned us and said: “Let us not be desirous of vain glory” [Galatians 5:26], while the LORD has rebuked the Pharisees, telling them: “How can you believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only?” [John 5:44]. The blessed David has also threatened these people and told them: “God has scattered the bones of him that encamps against thee” [Psalms 53:5].

**St. John Cassian**

Those that are occupied with the earthly matters would not allow for the establishment of new matters or for the old ones to be cleansed.

**Origen**

**2. *She abhors the bed of the uncircumcised:*** She greatly esteems that she belongs to the people of God, the circumcised people with whom God has made a covenant. She lived as a wife of the uncircumcised king but abhorred his bed, because she didn't want to unite with someone that does not believe in God.

**3. *God knows her necessities:*** She did not have any special requests, not because she is a queen and does not lack anything, but because God knows her necessities. She accepts from His hand what is extremely necessary and does not desire any luxuries.

**4. *She exhibits intense asceticism:*** She considered the royal high estates that she had to put on when she appeared before the king or the people as a menstruous rag that she longs to get rid of, and thus wear it not when she was by herself in her private room; but rather exhibited intense asceticism in her food, drink and garments.

**5. *She has nothing to desire from Aman's (the prime minister) or the Kings' table:*** Her food and drink is what feeds and waters her soul, namely her participation with God at the heavenly table. Many people think that they could find joy and pleasure in the spoilt life, while the life with God brings grief and depression. However, the reality is the other way round, for the spoilt life carries inner bitterness and depression in the midst of its laughter and luxury, while the life with God brings deep spiritual joy in the midst of the pain and troubles. The sin causes man to lose his spiritual joy, while the repentance grants him joy in the midst of the tears, and inner peace despite the strait gate and the narrow way. It was said about the spoiled soul: “But she that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives” [1 Timothy 5:6].

Nothing is more dangerous than the life of luxury and pleasure. Listen to what Moses has said about it: (Jacob) waxed fat, grown thick and kicked [Deuteronomy 32:15]. Moses didn't say that Jacob went, but that he kicked in order to show how much he became haughty and without control.

Moses also said that when you have eaten and are full: “beware that you forget not the LORD your God” [Deuteronomy 8:11], for satiation leads to forgetfulness. Therefore my beloved, when you sit to the table, remember to stem from the table to the prayer so that you would reasonably fill your stomach lest you would feel heavy and incapable of kneeling and calling unto God. What that we would not turn to bed after supper but to praying, lest we would become thicker than the irrational animals.

I know that many people criticize what I say, considering this to be a new habit that is strange to our lives. We were not born and do live to just eat and drink, but rather we eat to live. In the beginning life was not for the food, but the food for the

life. Yet, it seems that we have come to the world for this purpose, i.e. to give everything so that we would eat.

**St. John Chrysostom**

**6. *She rejoices that she is the daughter of Abraham:*** She declared that she is happy and joyful, not because of her position as a queen, but for being the daughter of Abraham [18] with whom and whose children God has made a covenant.

Some people may become ascetic, depriving themselves of the life necessities, yet their hearts are still occupied with trivialities; and thus Jesus our LORD –the Source of satiation- would not find a place in these hearts to rest His head. On the other hand, she used to put on the garments of glory before the king and his men, but they had no place in her heart. People might judge that she lives in high estate and in greatness, accompanying the king to his feasts, yet nobody knows that her glory, satiation and all her desires are in God alone, her heavenly Feast.

My poor soul, what do you seek after?!

If you wanted wisdom, you will find that Jesus is the Source of wisdom and even Wisdom itself!

If you wanted power and might, He is the Almighty!

If you searched for pleasure and joy, He is the true Source of joy!

If you longed for inebriation, His love inebriates the soul!

If you hungered for bread, He is the Bread of life!

If you admired richness, He is the Creator of all!

If you wanted rest, you will find your rest in Him alone!

Accept Him in, for no one else can satiate you.

**St. Augustine**

Maybe, as the apostle says about those who “have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” [Hebrews 5:14], Christ has become all of these things, fitting and satisfying the different senses of the soul.

He was called the true Light, so that the eyes of the soul would find something to light them up. He is the Word, so that the soul’s ears would find something to hear. Then, He is the Bread of life, so that the soul would find something to taste. In some ways He was called the ointment of spikenard, so that the soul’s sense of smell would realize the sweet scent of the Word. For the same reason it was also said that He is touchable and holdable, being called the incarnated Word, so that the soul’s inner hand would touch Him [1 John 1:1-4].

Yet, all these matters are one, the Word of God that adjusts to the different emotions of prayers and according to these various labels, thus leaving none of the soul’s capabilities lacking His grace.

**Origen**

## **SECOND: A QUEEN WHOSE SHELTER IS GOD**

No wonder that the girl that had lived as an orphan for a long time has recognized her heavenly Father under all circumstances. When she was appointed a queen, God was her stash and shelter. It was said: “Queen Esther also, being in fear of death, resorted unto the Lord” [Esther 14:1]. The word “resorted” carries the meaning that she found her shelter in God. Esther didn’t search for a human means, like the council of her trusted friends, but rather she hurried immediately to the shelter she is used to resort to, the LORD that is capable to save from death!

### **THIRD: A REJOICING QUEEN**

What attracts our attention is the saying: “all the places of her joy” [2] and also: “Neither had your handmaid any joy since the day that I was brought hither to this present, but in thee, O Lord God of Abraham” [18]. She also called herself “the desolate” [3, 14] twice, not to express her feeling of being isolated, for although she had no one to share her feelings and understand her inner problems, in the midst of her loneliness -despite the surrounding royal servants- her suite was like a paradise, where she would meet with the LORD her God to enjoy her partnership with Him. Her glory was on the inside, for the LORD is the secret of her joy and glory.

She never ate at the table of Aman nor greatly esteemed the feasts of the king. She never tasted the wine of the drink offerings, yet she was as jubilant as someone that eats the bread of the angles, sits with the heavenly beings and drinks of the wine of God’s love.

Even if the true believer considered himself lonely, yet in the midst of his loneliness he would experience an inner joy in the LORD!

With You I can stand up, and without You I am doomed!

With You I am filled with joy, and without You I perish with grief!

**St. Augustine**

### **FOURTH: A QUEEN THAT SEIZES ON THE DIVINE PROMISES**

“And she prayed unto the Lord God of Israel, saying, O my Lord, you only are our King: help me, desolate woman, which have no helper but thee, for my danger is in my hand. From my youth up I have heard in the tribe of my family that you, O Lord, took Israel from among all people, and our fathers from all their predecessors, for a perpetual inheritance, and you have performed whatsoever you did promise them” [3-5].

The saying: “the desolate woman, which has no helper but the LORD” was repeated [3, 14], for what fills up the emptiness of her loneliness is to review what she has learned from the moment of her birth, i.e. to suck the milk of the divine promises. She, along with the rest of her people, is the inheritance of the LORD, and in return they are enjoying Him as their eternal inheritance! This is the bequest that we ought to give our children: the true divine promises! This is their stash here and in the eternity.

### **FIFTH: A QUEEN THAT REPENTS HER SINS AND THE SINS OF HER PEOPLE**

Although she was a queen, she was not occupied with the greatness she received in the land of captivation nor did she complain on what came upon her and her people. She realized that God is just, righteous, and has allowed them all this because of their sins. There is no path to salvation without repentance, both on the personal and the group level, for she said: “we have sinned before thee, therefore you have given us into the hands of our enemies, because we worshipped their gods; O Lord, you are righteous” [6-7].

The righteous and wise person knows his weaknesses, while the ignorant doesn’t. Indeed, the wise man repents his faults and sins, while the ignorant finds pleasure in them. The righteous accuses himself, while the evil gives excuses. The righteous desires to precede his accuser in confessing his sins, while the evil tries to cover them up. The one hurries to declare his evil deeds and the other tries to accuse the others with his natter to cover up his evil doings.

**St. Ambrose**

Esther shared in the pain of her brethrens with all her heart and capabilities, but the pain did not swallow her as it appears in her prayer:

1. In her complaint before God she declared that the impedance is against God Himself, as if the people were not a partaker in the battle; rather the battle is between God and Satan. “O Lord, give not your scepter unto them that be nothing, and let them not laugh at our fall; but turn their device upon themselves, and make him an example, that has begun this against us” [11].

2. The enemy cannot stand God’s promises unto His people, and thus tries to abolish what God has ordained with His mouth. “Nevertheless it satisfies them not, that we are in bitter captivity, but they have stricken hands with their idols, that they will abolish the thing that you with your mouth has ordained, and destroy your inheritance” [8-9].

3. The enemy is striving to take away the spirit of joy and praises unto the LORD. He wishes to shut the mouths of them that praise so that none of them would carry the spirit of joy in the LORD or utter His praises and thanks. “... and stop the mouth of them that praise you, and quench the glory of your house, and of your altar, and open the mouths of the heathen to set forth the praises of the idols, and to magnify a fleshly king forever” [9-10].

4. Despite her trust in the Savior God, Esther request for more: “Remember, O Lord, make yourself known in time of our affliction, and give me boldness, O King of the nations, and Lord of all power” [12]. “But deliver us with your hand, and help me that am desolate, and which have no other help but you” [14].

5. Satan has turned the king –her husband- as if into a lion that would prey the people of God; yet his heart is in the hands of the LORD that can turn it like He pleases from hating the people of God to abhorring those that fight against them. “Give me eloquent speech in my mouth before the lion and turn his heart to hate him that fights against us, that there may be an end of him, and of all that are likeminded to him” [13].

As we are still in the midst of the battle, fighting and getting wounded, we might ask ourselves: Who will conquer?

My brethrens, the conqueror is the one that depends on God, who supports him as he fights, instead of depending on his own power. Satan is experienced in the field of battle, but if God was with us, we will conquer him. Satan fights on his own, thus if we tried to do the same, he will conquer us for he is an experienced warrior. Thus, we ought to call unto the Almighty to fight against him.

Let Him that cannot be beaten dwell inside you so that you would conquer the one that is used to prevailing. Who can he conquer? He conquers the ones whose hearts are empty from God.

**St. Augustine**

The devils can only harm those that hear them, that are not protected by God’s strong and mighty hands, and that were not taught the secret of truth. However, they fear the righteous.

**Lactantius**

## **SIXTH: A QUEEN THAT REQUESTS SALVATION FROM THE DEADLY FEAR!**

Esther asked God to answer her request, for she has no hope but in Him. She requested salvation from the sinners that are in the outside, but concluded her prayer by requesting His salvation from her internal weaknesses, especially the despair and

the fear that are the enemies of faith: “O mighty God above all, hear the voice of the forlorn and deliver us out of the hands of the mischievous, and deliver me out of my fear” [19].

The sinner ought to be aware of the severity of the wound and not to lose hope in the greatness of the Doctor, for the sin along with despair is a sure death.

No matter who you are, O you that have sinned and hesitated to repent your sin, do not despair from your salvation. Listen to David as he sighs. Nathan was not sent to you, but David himself. Listen to him as he cries out and cry out with him. Listen to him as he sighs and sigh along with him. Listen to him as he cries and mix your tears with his. Listen to him as he fixes his matters and rejoice with him.

If you were not excluded from sin, then don't exclude yourself from the hope of receiving forgiveness. Nathan was sent to this man. Note the humbleness of the king, for he did not think lightly of Nathan's words and he didn't tell him: How dare you speak with me like that, for I am the king? Rather, the king listened to the prophet. What that the humble people of Christ would listen to Him.

**St. Augustine**

If you were a stranger to every outer disturbance, you will hear the Spirit utter inside you with what is glorified. Your soul is the Jerusalem that pleases Christ, then why are you still wandering in the marketplaces of the Babylonians?

**St. John Saba**

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