

Last week we started thinking a little about God's favour and I said you cannot achieve favour, you must receive favour. Favour is God doing for you in Jesus what you can never do for yourself and the distinguishing mark of the presence, the favour of God, is what should mark God's people.

Here's the definition:

The favour of God is the guarantee of His presence and the provision of His power to accomplish His special purpose in and through my life.

Today I want to add that favour isn't fair. Because we can't earn it, or buy it, we must simply rely on God to show his favour, and sometimes we won't have it when we want it or you'll see other people being greatly blessed and wonder why it was them and not us. Last week we saw that ***Moses wanted to receive God's favour in order that he could know God better.*** And so, although there is no guarantee we are much more likely to receive favour when we are actively seeking God and his will for our lives. Our response to God's favour must be to say, "Show me how I can take the favour you've given me and be a channel of your favour for others." God doesn't give his favour for fun, or simply to bless you. It is to achieve his purpose in your life so that through you, others will be blessed. Of course you get to enjoy the blessing, the influence, the money, the skills or whatever it is that he has used to show favour to you.

I want to encourage you to note today that God's favour can be found even in most difficult circumstance; in the awful doctors report, when a relationship has fallen apart, when you're so lonely that you don't even feel like God is with you, let alone that he likes you and is for you. If we can learn how to perceive God's favour in our lives it changes everything.

We can't earn favour, but we can learn how to respond to it. Here are three things that can help with that:

1. Expect

In order to walk in favour the first thing we have to do is to expect. And if you're making notes write down next to the word expect - **frame your world with favour.**

Last week we mentioned two Bible characters, Moses and Mary, both of whom found favour with God. Both of them fulfilled God's purpose, and that purpose was bigger and more important than their convenience. That's actually what favour is about. God doesn't just offer to give you stuff, he offers to be something to you, to do something in you, to work something through you, and that's called favour. It's better than anything that you could get from anybody in this world. It's the special something of God. Frame your world with favour. Sometimes our expectations are so small, or misplaced rather than coming from our faith.

We could have talked about lots of different Bible characters: Abraham found favour in God's sight and it meant launching out into the unknown when God told him only, "Go to the land I'll show you." When Moses asked how he would know where to stop God said 'I'll tell you

when you get there.” That’s not how I have thought of favour in the past. I thought that God would simply give me things and that lots of the hard things in life would disappear, or at least be made a bit easier. But that’s not how it works.

Nehemiah, Daniel, Gideon, Esther, who found favour and saved the nation, Ruth who went from unknown outsider and slave to wife of Boaz and ancestor of Jesus. All of these, and many more through history have framed their world with favour. They decided that even when bad things happen they would choose to believe that God works all things for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose.

I’m going to give you, lets call it ‘the Favour Five’, five verses where God promises favour to his people. You can look at them later, talk about them at home, talk with your friends or neighbours, even if they don’t go to church.

Leviticus 26:9 *I will look on you with favour and make you fruitful and increase your numbers, and I will keep my covenant with you.*

Psalms 5:12 *Surely Lord, you have blessed the righteous; you surround them with your favour as with a shield.*

I love to know that God’s favour is not only behind me, what he did in the past, but is also in front of me and beside me.

Psalms 84:11 *For the Lord God is a Sun and shield, the Lord bestows favour and honour, and no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.*

You might say, “My walk isn’t blameless, so it doesn’t apply to me.” None of us are blameless. But the thing is that Jesus was and he lived the life you and I couldn’t live, he died the death that we should have died and now he offers forgiveness and life to anyone who will believe in him. When God looks at us he sees Jesus in us.

Proverbs 8:35 *For those who find me find life and receive favour from the Lord.*

Just in case any of you are thinking that those are all from the Old Testament here’s what Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 6:2 *For he says, “In the time of my favour I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.” I tell you, now is the time of God’s favour, now is the day of salvation.* (Isaiah 49:8)

I want to grow in God’s favour, and I want to flow in God’s favour, and I want him to guide me and direct me so the first I have to do is expect that he will. It’s not that you can manipulate a miracle from God. But when you’re looking for him and expecting him to be at work in and through your life you talk and think differently. You don’t ask, “I wonder what’s going to go wrong today?” You actually ask, “I wonder how God is going to take that challenge that I’m facing and use it to show how amazing he is?”

Sometimes you hear people say, “It’s the story of my life” when bad things happen to them. And if that’s you, you need to stop it. Sometimes bad things do happen, but if you’re one of the ‘story of my life’ people: if you always disappointed, always frustrated, always intimidated, and you never expect God to be good to you; if that’s the story of your life then you need to get a new director for your story. Favour should be the primary frame of reference for the child of God. My children don’t ask permission to eat whatever is in our fridge, it’s part of the package and the Bible says that as children of God all of the riches, resources and abundance of God’s kingdom are available to us and we need to expect to receive them as we follow God.

2. Recognise

Again, if you’re taking notes write down underneath the word recognise - **open your eyes to opportunity**.

I was reading an article the other day by Stephen Furtick, an American pastor who had taken his son to a basketball game. He had been gifted a VIP package because that’s what good church members should do for their pastors and ministers. Anyway, they went in the special entrance and Michael Jordan was there. He was one of the greatest basketball players of all-time so Stephen knelt down next to his young son and said, “Look, it’s Michael Jordan.” To which his son replied, “Can we get some popcorn now?” He didn’t care about Michael Jordan. He just wanted popcorn. Sometimes we don’t see the amazing thing that’s right in front of our face because we are focused on something else. And that’s true of the favour of God. We need to learn to recognise when God is at work in our lives and open our hearts, so that God can pour his blessing and his favour into our circumstances.

God will give you the favour you need for the season you’re in, to do what he’s called you to do.

And what we have to do is learn to ask God what is the favour he wants to give in this season, and what purpose does he have for giving it. If *the favour of God is the guarantee of His presence and the provision of His power to accomplish His special purpose in and through my life* then that means that sometimes we will be blessed by things; sometimes it is about circumstances we think are impossible working out in a way that we couldn’t imagine and we know that God has done it. Favour is designed to help us trust God more, to expect and enjoy his presence, and to experience his power in our lives. We need to recognise where he is at work – Moses at the burning bush – thank him for what he’s done and expect more.

Number three: it does no good to find the favour of God - if you expect it and frame your world with it, and recognise it and open your eyes to it if you don’t do number 3.

3. Respond

And underneath respond, write, ‘**give yourself to obedience**’ if you’re taking notes.

Although you can’t produce or achieve God’s favour, you can position yourself to receive it when you expect it and recognise it. You also need to respond to it. The appropriate response is to make a commitment to be someone who doesn’t just feel or experience the favour of God now and again, but who walks in it constantly by following hard after God. King David, who for all his faults and failings, was called by God, “a man after my own heart”, wrote these words, “*Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life.*” When we follow God, his goodness and mercy surround us. We don’t need to try to manipulate circumstances and situations, rather, we need to expect and recognise that when God is for us nothing can stand against us, and that by being where he’s called us to be, doing what he’s called us to do, and becoming what he’s called us to become we position ourselves to receive his favour.

This is not about some big one off experience, it is actually about little steps of obedience that build up and build up and build up. It’s about being faithful in reading and praying; taking that small step of faith; sometimes taking a leap of faith; it’s about allowing God to shape you to be the person he wants you to be, being willing to put him first. And maybe God is calling you to take a simple step of obedience today. It might not seem like much right now, and it might not be that exciting, but maybe there’s a blessing, an impact, a change that is logged into that one step of obedience that is bigger and more significant than you can even imagine.

Let’s decide to walk together in the favour of God.