

Unmerited Favour

Chapter 1

This is the beginning of a new series on the favour of God in our lives. We are studying Joseph Prince's book, Unmerited Favour.

Today we look at success as the hallmark of favour. Joseph Prince says, God's definition of success is not *what* you have, but rather *who* you have! It is the presence of the Lord in your life that makes you a success! Jesus' unmerited favour will protect, deliver, prosper, restore and transform you into wholeness. His unmerited favour will cause you to enjoy success beyond your natural intelligence, qualifications and ability!

Let's look at the life of Joseph, who as a young man, was sold by his brothers as a slave in a foreign country, Egypt. Potiphar, who was one of Pharaoh's officials, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there. We would think that things could not go much worse for someone than that. Yet we read in Genesis 39:3,4 that *"The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favour in his eyes and he became his attendant."* We read further how he was put in charge of Potiphar's household, and entrusted with everything he owned, and that the Lord blessed the household of Potiphar because of Joseph.

So what is success? Success in today's terms is based on what you have done, accomplished and accumulated. It is based entirely on you. But the world's model of success is based on a shakeable foundation, that is temporal and easily slips away like shifting sands. But from the description

of Joseph, we see that success is not *what* you have, but rather *who* you have! Joseph had nothing materially, but at the same time, he had everything, because the Lord was with him. We see that it is the presence of the Lord in his life that made him successful! The same would apply to us.

We need to stop following after things and start following after Him. God sees your relationship with Him as the only thing that you need for every success in your life. Joseph had nothing, no bank accounts, education, qualifications, or connections with people. So you can have hope today. If you feel that, like Joseph, you have nothing, you can start believing in the power of the presence of the Lord in your life.

Personalize that same promise, "*The Lord is with me, and I am a successful person.*" Read this aloud to yourself until you begin to see this as your reality. Remind yourself of this promise every day, stick it on your mirror as you brush your teeth, as you go to school, or start the day caring for your children, or going to work. The Lord is with you and because He is with you, you are already a success! When Jesus is in your life, you are no longer trying to be a success, you ARE a success!

In the story of Jesus' birth, the angel came to Joseph, who was engaged to Mary, and she became pregnant. He had not had sexual relations with her, and he wanted to put her away secretly, not wanting to expose her. But the angel visited him one night and told him, "*Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.*" Jesus literally means, "*the Lord (Yahweh) is our Saviour*". Every time you call the name of Jesus, the name that is above

every other name, you are calling God Himself to save you. Whatever crisis you are in today, physically, financially, or emotionally – you can call on the name of Jesus and Almighty God Himself will save you!

You need to know that God Almighty, Jesus, first wants to save you from all your sins, then from all your challenges. God is all powerful, but if you are not confident that He is interested in your success, His power would mean nothing to you. You need a full revelation that Jesus in the new covenant, is your Saviour!

The Bible says, *“All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will give call him 'Immanuel' - which means, “God with us.”* Jesus means, God Almighty who saves us, and God Almighty who is with us.

In the OT we read that every time the Lord was with the people of Israel, they succeeded in their battles against the enemy. Even when they were outnumbered, they succeeded when the Lord was with them. Only a victory shout caused the walls to fall down around Jericho. When the Bible says that Jesus is with you, it means that He is with you to help you, to turn things around for you, and make good things happen for you. He is not with you, as some believe, to condemn, judge and find fault with you. When God Almighty is with you, good things will happen in you, around you, and through you.

Of course you need to know that you have His Spirit living in you. If you do, say that verse aloud, *“Jesus is with me, so everything I do will succeed.”* It is not enough to have mental assent that Jesus is with you, but begin to be conscious of Jesus' presence. Start by speaking out His presence. *“Lord, I belong to you and You are with me.”*

The best time to thank Jesus for His presence is when you don't "feel" His presence. When it comes to the presence of Jesus, don't go by your feelings. They can be deceptive. Go by His promise that He is Immanuel. Remind yourself that He is with you, even if you **feel** like Jesus is 1000 miles away. God's Word is the truth.

I want you to know that whatever role or job you are in, Jesus is with you and He wants to make you a success. His unmerited favour is for you. The Lord Immanuel is with you. God wants you to succeed in every area! And with His presence in your life, you can. His unmerited favour can swing open doors of opportunities and place you in the right place at the right time for His blessings.

You may be sitting with a secret addiction that is eating you from the inside, and all your struggling, willpower, and discipline and self-effort could not bring you the freedom you long for. But the presence of the Lord can do in an instant what you may have struggled with for years and not succeeded. You see, you are not transformed by struggling, but by looking at Jesus and believing that He loves you and wants to save you, from any and every bondage.

If God can do it for Joseph, a young man sold into slavery, He can do it for you! You may be looking for a job right now, or you may be facing a difficult challenge at home, in your marriage, or at work. Believe and declare that Jesus is Immanuel. He will save you and be with you in this challenge. In Hebrews 13:5, "*God has said, never will I leave you; never will I forsake you. So we say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid, What can man do to me?'*" We need never be afraid when Immanuel is with us.

If you have not yet received Him into your life, invite Him today. Pray after me, "*Father, thank you for sending Jesus to save me from my sins. I know that I am lost without you. Come into my life by your Holy Spirit. Take away my sin, and set me free from every bondage. I believe, Jesus, that you save me now, and from this moment onwards, you will always be with me. And I believe that my life now will be a success. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*"

God bless you till next week as continue studying the unmerited favour and blessing of God.

Unmerited Favour

Chapter 2

We are studying the book, Unmerited Favour by Joseph Prince. Last week we spoke about success as the hallmark of favour. We said, God's definition of success is not *what* you have, but rather *who* you have! It is the presence of the Lord in your life that makes you a success! Jesus means, “*God our Saviour*”, and Immanuel means “*God is with us*”. When we have his Spirit living in us, we can know and believe that our life already is a success.

Today we look at who you are depending on - yourself or Jesus? Do you want to fight for yourself, or do you want Almighty God to fight for you? When you depend on yourself, **you** carry all the stress, burdens and anxieties. But Phil 4:6-7 says, “*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your requests to God. And the God of peace, that transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*” When Jesus is your source of success, there is no stress and God's peace will guard your heart. “Peace” in Hebrew is “Shalom”, which includes the meaning of peace, prosperity, health, completeness, soundness and safety. What a powerful promise in one word!

Maybe you are facing very difficult circumstances today – you may have lost your source of income, your bank account is empty, and you don't know how you are going to pay your rent. Or maybe you have just received a devastating medical report. Your whole world seems to be crashing down around you. What can you do? Now is the time for you to turn away from yourself and look to Jesus. Can Jesus rescue you from the crisis you are in? Yes, He certainly can!

Let's go back to the story of Joseph we looked at last week. He had been given a special colourful tunic by his father, and this showed that he had higher status than his brothers, who had coarse linen clothes. This meant that he did not have to work in the fields in the hot sun like his brothers, but just attend to his father and bring his father pleasure. This also spoke of a position of favour and rest with his father. His brothers were very jealous of him for this, and when Joseph shared his dreams with them, they hated him even more.

We know how Joseph was sent by his father to check on them, and how they plotted to kill him. He was seized, stripped of his tunic and dragged to a nearby pit, then sold to Ismaelite traders on their way to Egypt. Just a few days earlier he was in his father's embrace, now he ended up a slave in a foreign land. We read last week in Gen 39:3,4 that the Lord was with Joseph and "his master (Potiphar) saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did." Can you imagine every project or errand that you do, becoming successful and blessed? Your hands become hands of blessing. You become a blessing waiting to happen to someone, or waiting to happen to something, everywhere you go!

How will this happen? God will make it happen when you depend on Him in the same way that Joseph depended on him. Joseph had lost everything. He had nothing left, only the Lord's presence and His power and His glory that shone through him. We all as Christians have his presence, but when his presence is seen by others in our lives, that's when His glory shines through us.

Potiphar, a heathen, did not just conclude that Joseph was a good worker, but that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did. He must have

seen results that were beyond that of an ordinary human being. Perhaps he ordered Joseph to dig wells, and every well yielded water in the midst of a drought. Perhaps he saw how Joseph called on his God when the children in the house were ill, and they were all healed.

My personal prayer and desire is to have the same kind of results Joseph had. In everything I do, I want people to see Jesus! And when I share with people, for them to hear Jesus speaking to their hearts through me. I am a vessel, and my words alone have no power. But at **His** Word, sinners can get saved, sick bodies can get healed, demons will flee, marriages can be restored, debts can be supernaturally cancelled, fears will disappear, hearts will be encouraged, hope will be restored and joy can be renewed.

Joseph Prince says, *“When you stop “doing” and start depending on God's divine favour, you will begin to experience the Jesus-kind of results.”* You see, people are occupied with “doing” right when they want success. But the point we want to make is that you are encouraged not to focus on what **you** are doing, but to focus on looking to Jesus. Stop trying to earn God's blessings and start depending on Jesus's unmerited favour for every success in your life. That is when results begin to happen.

I want to point you to Jesus. It is his strong felt presence, His wonderful power working in your heart and through your hands, that will cause everything you touch to be successful. Even your harshest critic will have to conclude that the Lord is with you and is blessing the work of your hands. Remember, the same God who was with Joseph, is with you today. Because He is with you, **expect** good success in everything that you do! For example, when you are in charge of a project at work, **believe** that your sales team will hit record levels of sales, or if you are in the financing

department, **believe** that you will help the company save on expenses and increase their cash flow, or that Jesus will cause doors that have always been closed to be opened for your business, because of His undeserved favour. Depend on Jesus and Jesus alone, if you want to experience his success.

Remember, if you are inexperienced or unqualified, live and operate in the supernatural realm! The Lord Jesus is with you 100%. You are a successful person as you depend on Him and He will cause everything that your hands touch to prosper.

Joseph Prince says, *“Without Him, we cannot. Without us, he will not.”* We need to recognise that if we do not depend on Jesus, even as believers, there can be no real, longlasting success. Unless the Lord builds the house, we labour in vain. (Psalm 127:1) He waits patiently for us to truly trust him and depend on His unmerited favour, without trying to work it out ourselves, or trying to make ourselves right with God by keeping laws and rules. Gal 5:4 says, *“You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ, you have fallen away from grace.”* You have been cut off from the place of having His favour work in your life. Even though He is still with you as a believer, your depending on yourself and your own efforts, make you miss out on His blessings and favour.

Let's trust Him the way Joseph trusted and depended wholly on the Lord's presence. God's presence will be seen by others, and His glory will shine out of everything that you do.

Pray with me as we close, *“Father, today I trust you in my life and situation. I want to stop struggling in my own attempts to somehow “deserve” your favour and blessing. I choose to rest in your unmerited favour, and I believe that your presence will fill my life, so that others will see Jesus. I believe your glory will be upon everything I touch and do. Thank you, Jesus. Amen.”*

God bless you till next week as we continue studying the unmerited favour and blessing of God.

Unmerited Favour

Chapter 3

Last week we spoke about depending on God in our situation. We said, *when you stop “doing” and start depending on God's divine favour, you will begin to experience the Jesus-kind of results.* His real felt presence will be seen in our every day lives, and as in the life of Joseph, we can believe that everything we do, will be successful.

We are studying Joseph Prince's book, Unmerited Favour. Today we look at the Jesus-kind of success, that does not lead to our downfall. God wants us to have a relationship with Him that will keep us safe for success.

We all know the danger of the power of financial success. God has no problem with you having money, but he does not want money to have you! We often misquote the Scripture saying that money is the root of all evil, but it says, *“The love of money is the root of all evil.”* (1 Tim 6:10) However, the obsession with and intense love of money will lead to all kinds of evil. Someone who is always purchasing lottery tickets, going to casinos and gambling, clearly has an unsatiable love for getting more and more money.

God called Abraham in Gen 12:2 saying, *“I will bless you,,, and you shall be a blessing.”* We, as the seed of Abraham are called to be a blessing to others in need. In other words, God wants to bless us to have more than just living from hand to mouth, always having to borrow from one person to pay another. He wants us to be the ones to be generous with those who need help - blessed to be a blessing!

Jesus bore the curse of poverty on the cross. 2 Cor 8:9 declares that, *“For you know that the grace of our Lord*

Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty you might become rich.” Similarly we can depend on Him for his resurrection life to pulsate through our physical bodies to walk in health, from the crown of our heads to the soles of our feet. Jesus bore not only our sins on the cross, but also our sicknesses and diseases.

What we need to understand is this: God, our Father, deals with us from the point of relationship. Just as we as parents would not use sickness and disease or the curse of poverty to teach our children lessons of patience and humility, God does not. We, as parents, always seek the best things for our children. How much more our Father in heaven who wants the best things for us, to always enjoy His divine health and His supernatural provision. Matthew 7:11 says, *“If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”* When He provides, we must get ready for a net-breaking, boat-sinking load, or for 12 basket-fulls of leftovers!

It is through His unmerited favour in our lives, we will learn character, patience and humility. We learn to rest from our self-efforts and learn to depend on Him. The more we know our Father, the more we become like Him. He causes us to grow from glory to glory in every area of our lives – if we simply look at Him, 2 Cor 3:18 tells us.

Joseph Prince says, *“God is not against you having money and material things. He is against money and things having you!”* God abhors sickness and He loathes poverty. He gave everything He had to annihilate sickness and poverty when He gave us His only Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for us. We only have to respond to Jesus' finished work for our sins to be forgiven, for our physical bodies to be healed, and for

our poverty to become history.

Joseph Prince says, *“Use money and love people. Don't love money and use people.”* God wants his people to have enough to be a blessing. At the same time, he wants us to have hearts ablaze with passion for Jesus and His presence, rather than for empty materialistic things.

Rom 14:17 says, *“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”* And if we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all our needs will be met as well. We are more valuable than the birds that God feeds, how much more will he provide for us as we trust him.

In Jer 9:23 it says, *“This is what the Lord says, 'Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom, or the strong man boast of his strength, or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness of heart, for in these I delight,' declares the Lord.”*

Let's be a people who will not boast or depend on our riches or wisdom, but boast and depend on Him and his favour. The more you focus on looking at Jesus in all His loveliness and the less you struggle to earn things by our own merits, the more you become safe for greater success in your life.

We said last week that the real presence of the Lord in Joseph's life, made all that Joseph did, to prosper. And then Potiphar promoted Joseph to be over all that he owned. Gen 39:5.6 says, *“The Lord blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field.”* Believe that because you as a child of God, are in the organisation, that organisation will thrive and be blessed. The Lord will bless it for your sake.

Let's look at the difference between God's unmerited favour and

favouritism. The first is entirely based on Jesus' merit, on nothing we have deserved. Favouritism, however, stinks of self-effort. Those who rely on favouritism for promotion, have to resort to manipulative tactics, backstabbing and all kinds of compromises just to get what they want. They use all their efforts to open doors for themselves, and in the process, they lose themselves.

God has a higher and better way for us. If a door closes, then believe with full confidence that God has a better way for you. You do not have to depend on favouritism to keep opportunities open for yourself, when you have God's unmerited favour on your side!

How did Joseph deal with his success? He knew it was not Potiphar who promoted him from a lowly slave to become the overseer of the entire estate. It was the Lord! In the same way, when Joseph was tempted by Potiphar's wife, who most likely was a beautiful lady in that position, Joseph knew that a moral fall would damage his relationship with the Lord. The Bible tells us that "*day by day*" she tried to seduce him to sleep with her. There was no doubt that she was a real temptation to Joseph, but he refused to even be with her (39:10). He said, "*No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?*" (39:9) It was God who blessed Joseph and he knew that he would be sinning against God to give in to that temptation.

Joseph lived many years before the ten commandments were given. "*You shall not commit adultery*". (Ex 30:14) Who then taught Joseph, who was a red-blooded young man far away from home? Nobody was around and nobody would know. But Joseph had a relationship with God. He knew that the Lord was with him every step of the way, and that the Lord blessed him. And he knew that the sin of adultery would damage his relationship with God.

When we have a living relationship with Jesus, he will write his laws upon our minds and write them on our hearts, causing us to walk in His ways that lead to life. Then we can be safe with success. Knowing that Jesus is your success, will make you safe for success.

God bless you till next week as we continue studying the unmerited favour and blessing of God.

Unmerited Favour

Chapter 4

Last week we spoke about having a living relationship with Jesus. He will cause us to walk in His ways that lead to life and then we can be safe with success, and success will not become our undoing.

We are studying Joseph Prince's book, *Unmerited Favour*, and today we look at experiencing success beyond our circumstances. Romans 8:31 says, "*If God is for us, who can be against us?*" It is not a "*maybe*" or "*hopefully God is for us.*" It is a definite, a fact. Indeed, if God is for you, what opposition can succeed against you?

Many believers feel that because they still fail and fall short of God's holy standards, they don't qualify for His blessings. But wonderfully, it no longer depends on us, but it is the blood of Jesus shed on the cross, that put God on our side.

Remember what happened in the Old Testament on the night of the Passover in Egypt. The families that applied the blood on their door-posts did not have to fear the death of their firstborn children. Were the firstborn children of Israel spared that night because of their perfect behaviour and conduct, or were they spared because of the blood of the lamb? Of course, it was because of the blood of the lamb! In the same way, we as believers are not blessed because of our perfect behaviour and conduct, but God is for us today because of Jesus, the perfect Lamb.

God's unmerited favour is on your side and all of heaven's resources are yours because of Jesus' blood! No sickness, no disease, no creditor, no evil accusation, no gossip can succeed against you – no weapon formed against you, can succeed!

Some people believe that doing a lot for charity or doing acts of kindness will put God on their side, or if they have donated money to the poor, these things will give them favour with God. But the truth is, God is not with you because of what you have done or not done. His love is unconditional. He is about relationship, not rules. Even Christians believe that praying or fasting will gain increased favour with God. Let me ask you, does God answer your prayers because of **your** merit or **Jesus'** merit? Of course it is because of Jesus' merit.

So let us remember, we can never **deserve** God's favour, but he wants us to **receive** everything through His undeserved love. When we read the Bible and pray and fast, it should be from a heart that **wants to**, and not from a heart that **has to**. Out of an overflowing abundance of appreciation for His love that we don't deserve, we desire to hear His voice and seek His face. The presence of Jesus in your life is a free gift from God – no number of good works that you do will merit His favour.

God is with us today because of his Son, Jesus, because of Immanuel. God **gave** Jesus. His presence is a free gift. Because we did **nothing** to deserve his presence in our lives, there is **nothing** we can do that will cause his presence to leave us. But you ask, if we sin, does He not leave us then? No, Jesus is right by your side to encourage you and restore you to wholeness. Psalm 37:23,24 says, *“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholds him with His hand.”* And remember, our goodness is not of ourselves, it is because of his Holy Spirit in us.

There was a time under the law in the Old Testament that

God would be with you only when you were in complete obedience. Today we are under a completely different covenant and God will never leave us. Jesus became our burnt offering. He bore our sins and carried our punishment. Jesus was forsaken at the cross by His Father, so that today, we can have God's constant, unceasing presence in our lives! When Jesus cried, *"My God, why have you forsaken me?"* - that was when the exchange took place. When you're doing right, He is with you. Even when you have failed, he is still with you!

In Heb 13:5, *"God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.' So we say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?'"* When we are up or down, glad or sad, He is with us. The original Greek has a double negative in that verse; in other words God is saying, *"I will never never leave you, I will never never forsake you"*. The Amplified Bible says, *"I will not in any way fail you, nor give you up, nor leave you without support. I will not, I will not, I will not in any degree leave you helpless nor forsake you, nor let you down or relax My hold on you. Assuredly not!"* How powerful is that!

But what if our circumstances change? Let's continue our study of Joseph. We explained last week how Potiphar's wife tried repeatedly to seduce Joseph. When he fled, leaving his garment in her hands, she used that garment to accuse Joseph falsely to her husband, that he had tried to rape her. Of course Potiphar was angry, stripped him of all authority and threw him into prison. Joseph still had the recent painful memory of his brothers throwing him into a pit. And he could have asked, *"Where is God? Why did God abandon him now? Where is justice now?"*

But Joseph knew the Lord would never leave him, and did not look at his circumstances, but kept his focus on the presence of the Lord

regardless. Instead of getting bitter, he kept his hope in the Lord, knowing that all his success was wrapped up in the presence of the Lord.

Gen 39:21 tells us, *“But while Joseph was there in prison, the Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favour in the eyes of the prison warden. So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in prison and he was made responsible for all that was done there. The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.”*

When the unmerited favour of God is upon you wherever you are, like it was upon Joseph, you cannot help but find favour, and prosper and experience increase. It is like a rubber ball in a pool of water. Natural circumstances can try to push you down and keep you suppressed under water, but the unmerited favour of God will always cause you to pop right up to the top!

You may be in a pretty bleak situation at the moment. Don't be discouraged, it's not over yet, my friend! Many times the lowest point becomes the launching pad for God's greatest promotion in your life. But let's fast-forward the story of Joseph to the end, when he interpreted Pharaoh's dream and then became his prime minister over the entire Egyptian empire, way above even Potiphar himself! Joseph's darkest hour turned into his finest hour. This is what Pharaoh said, *“Can we find anyone like this man, in whom is the Spirit of God? Then Pharaoh said, 'Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.’”* And we know how Joseph's own family were saved in that famine, through the revelation and wisdom from God in his interpretation of Pharaoh's dream.

Joseph was promoted from the pit to the palace. Don't look at your circumstances and don't let them discourage you. The same Lord who was with Joseph, is with you right now. You can expect and believe for success beyond your present circumstances! Trust Him. God bless you this next week when we continue our study of God's wonderful, unmerited favour.

Unmerited Favour

Chapter 5

Last week we spoke about experiencing success beyond our circumstances. We said if God is for us, as He was with Joseph, who can be against us? You can believe that His divine favour will bring you to the place of promotion and blessing, despite the low point you may be at the moment.

We are studying Joseph Prince's book, *Unmerited Favour*. Today we want to look at how we can experience God's real felt presence, by practising His presence. It is when we move beyond the theory that God is with us, to being conscious of that. Even just reading or listening about Jesus, is an effortless way of becoming more conscious of his presence.

As you think of him more and more, you will begin to experience a greater peace we never had, a strength and joy like never before. His wisdom will increase and your decision-making ability will be sharpened; even breakthroughs may happen that you have only longed for.

You see, trees don't strain and struggle to produce fruit. Instead, with enough sunlight and water, in good soil, fruit is produced effortlessly. So also with enough SON-light and living water of God's Word, good fruit will begin to be produced effortlessly in your life. Your health is a fruit. Family harmony is a fruit. Career success is a fruit. In his presence, stress, anger and depression will fade away and no longer dominate your thoughts. Worry will have no foothold in your mind. The consciousness of Jesus' perfect love for you removes every vestige of fear. You can feel and start behaving like a new creation in Christ that you are, regardless of your circumstances.

Something precious happens when you see that the Lord is with you. Trust Him to open your eyes to see Him in your situation, and the more you see Him, the more he shows Himself. You may be in the midst of an important business agreement, and I assure you, if you can see the Lord there with you, His wisdom will flow through you and give your supernatural insight to locate any loopholes or exit clauses that are missing from that contract you are about to sign.

Once you acknowledge him in any decision you are about to make, he will show you with his peace. If the absence of His peace, or a sense of discomfort rises up in you every time you think about your decision – then my advice to you would be to not rush into it. The lack of the Lord's peace is often His leading to protect you. You can even be in the midst of an argument with your spouse, but the moment you become conscious of the Lord's presence, your words will change. The Lord will give you a supernatural restraint.

God's presence is with us to direct us, to guide us, to lead us into becoming more like Christ, and to make us a success in every endeavour we undertake.

Remember, that the idea that the Lord is present to find fault with you all the time, is not the truth. You may have been raised in an environment where your parents were always picking on your faults and pointing out your mistakes. God is not like that – he loves you perfectly because he sees you through the lens of the cross, where His Son removed every failing from your life.

The Lord's presence is not with you to smack you on the the head with a giant bat the moment you fail, but is with you to direct you, to lead you into becoming more like Him, and make you a success and blessing. He is there in the midst of your fears. The moment you begin to be aware of his

presence and cultivate His presence, anxieties and worries will melt like butter in the sun. David said in Psalm 97:5, *“The mountains melt like wax at the presence of the Lord.”* What mountains are looming before you today? Allow his presence to melt them away.

Psyching yourself up to stop worrying in the face of debt does not work, no matter how hard you try. It takes the presence of the Lord to keep you free from worry. Jesus is not asking you to live in self-denial, but He says, *“In the midst of your trouble, I am your shield. I am your defender. I am your helper. I am your refuge. I am your healing. I am your provider. I am your peace. I am your joy. I am your wisdom. I am your strength. I am the glory and the lifter of your head!”* Isn't that powerful? He does not want you to pretend the facts are not there, but wants you to realise that HE IS THERE WITH YOU in the midst of your circumstances!

When you know He is with you and for you, and you put your problems in His mighty hands, you will begin to get a more accurate evaluation of just how small your problems are in the face of his power. He then carries the weight and burden, and they become microscopic in His hands.

You see, 1 Pet 5:7 tells us, *“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”* Unless you have absolute confidence that Jesus cares for you, you will not cast your cares on Him. But know, that when you call on Jesus, you have His fullest attention with all of heaven's resources backing you up! Don't think that he has more important issues to do than bother with your problem. He cares so much that he says in Luke 12:7, *“the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”* If he cares enough to keep track of the hairs that fall out of your head, is there anything too small for

him that you cannot talk to Him about? He is vitally and intensely involved in the day-to-day minute details of your life.

I want to encourage you to see Jesus in the midst of everything that you do. I often listen to the Bible on my MP3 or read the Word and I drink of the living waters from Jesus. I am conscious that Jesus is by my side and speaking to my heart. You can enjoy Jesus' presence while you are driving your car or sitting in the taxi. Anything we do, even reading the Bible, without his presence, becomes a dead work. But when you are spending time with your best friend, talking to him, it no longer becomes a chore.

So, see the Lord in the midst of everything you do and learn to bring him into the picture. He makes everything beautiful in your life. When you look at your past, the scars of yesterday may still be throbbing in your memory. Perhaps you were sexually abused or emotionally hurt by someone you trusted. As you look back now, you may still feel angry, shamed, disappointed all at the same time, and the hurt still pierces your heart. I want to challenge you to start involving Jesus. See the Lord holding and comforting you, gently healing your wounds. See him restoring you, putting courage into your heart and taking away all the sense of shame and guilt.

He wants you to know that your past need not determine your future that He has for you. Once you involve Him and put him into your bitter waters. He will turn the bitterness into sweetness. He did this for the Israelites. When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water, because it was bitter. The Lord showed Moses a piece of wood, which Moses was told to throw into the water, and when he did that, the Bible says, "*the water became sweet.*" The wood is a picture of the cross on which Jesus hung, bearing every broken heart and every sting of betrayal. When you bring Jesus into your situation, He can cause every bitter experience to become sweet! Talk to him and allow His presence to restore you today!

God bless you till next week, when we continue our study of God's wonderful, unmerited favour.

Unmerited Favour

Chapter 6

Last week we spoke about practising to live in the presence of the Lord. It is when we move beyond the theory that God is with us, to being conscious of that. We encouraged you to see the Lord in the midst of everything you do and learn to bring him into the picture. That is when he can turn the bitter water of your past into sweet water. He can and wants to do that.

We are studying Pastor Prince's book, *Unmerited Favour*, and today we look at your right to this favour. All of us want to enjoy God's rich blessings, but do we deserve it? How do we qualify for it? What gives you the right to it, and why can you ask God for big things?

The answer is found in the cross of Jesus, where Jesus became sin, so that you and I can become the righteousness of God in Him. So, because we exchanged our unrighteousness for his holy righteousness, we can expect his good favour, and can ask him for big things. Your righteousness in **Jesus** is the foundation on which you can build your expectations to receive this favour. God sees you through the lens of the cross, and as **Jesus** is deserving of blessings, peace, health and favour, so are you!

What exactly is righteousness? It is our right standing or position before God. When we fail, we certainly don't feel righteous, or eligible for blessing. We have been conditioned into thinking that we will be blessed if we are humble, or if we give to the poor; and it sounds noble and self-sacrificing, and makes us feel our good deeds will earn us righteousness. But the only one God is interested in is Jesus' humility at the cross and his perfect sacrifice that justifies us and makes us righteous. Even trying to keep the

Ten Commandments will not help us. Paul says in Gal 2:21, *“I do not set aside the grace God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing.”*

If you have watched the movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, directed by Mel Gibson, you will remember how the anguish that Jesus endured in Gethsemane was clearly portrayed. It showed how Jesus was taken by ruthless Roman soldiers, mocked, a crown of thorns rammed onto head. He continued to suffer lash after lash from whips laced with broken glass and hooks, inflicting maximum pain. Jesus collapsed from the blows, but did not stay down – he got up, with you and me in mind, clinging to the beating post and dragging himself up to receive the full measure of the scourging, knowing, that is was those stripes by which we are healed.

Then the heavy cross was shoved onto his bloodied back, to carry. In his weakened state he fell after staggering part of the way, when a passer-by was forced to help Him. He then was stretched out over the cross and huge, long nails were cruelly hammered into his hands and feet. Was all this for nothing? This is what Paul says, to believers who insist on their own righteousness through the law, Jesus died for nothing. You see, we can never deserve this righteousness by our own works, not when we come to Him and not any time after that. It is a free gift for us, not because it is cheap, but because it cost Him dearly. He paid for it with his blood.

How could Jesus, who knew no sin, become sin for us on the cross? He chose to take upon himself all our sins, past, present and future, and in exchange, chose to give us his perfect, everlasting righteousness. It is clearly his work. Romans 11:6 says, *“And if by grace, then it is no longer by works, if it were, grace would no longer be grace. (unmerited favour).* The opposite is also true - *if it is by*

works, then it is no longer by grace; if it were, work would no longer be work.”

There is no middle road. Either you are righteous by his unmerited favour or you are trying to earn it with your own works. You are either depending on Jesus, or you are depending on yourself.

But you ask, why is this so important? Because when you are trying to believe God for big things and your prayers to be answered, you will be hounded by the voice of the devil, the accuser. *“Who do you think you are? Don't you remember how you yelled at your spouse this morning? How can you have the cheek to expect good things to happen to you? And when was the last time you read your Bible? Why should God heal your child?”* This is where the rub comes. You can agree with the accuser, and believe that because of your behaviour, you don't deserve God's favour, not for that job application or for healing. But then you will feel defeated and even more angry than earlier that day, and you will be swearing at every driver on the way home, and you will want to blame your wife for putting you in a bad mood all day. This will make you feel even more shamed and frustrated and depressed, and you will want to soak yourself in some self-indulgence in an attempt to try to feel better.

Or else you can think, *yes, I don't deserve to have God's favour, because I lost my temper. BUT I am not looking at what I deserve, but at what Jesus deserves. Even now Jesus sees me as perfectly righteous, and because of the cross and his perfect sacrifice, I can expect God's unmerited favour in my job application or for healing. Every one of my shortcomings are covered by Jesus' righteousness, and I can expect good, not because I am good, but because Jesus is good!* You will be driving home in a completely different mood, and

feel the Father's peace and joy, His love and favour. So, right believing always leads to right living.

Does this mean that we sweep all our failings under the carpet and pretend that they never happened? No, but when we know that the Lord still loves us, and is still with us, we will find the strength to apologise to our spouse, and walk in God's forgiveness that is given us in Jesus.

When God answers us in our most undeserving moment, that is grace. That is His amazing, unmerited favour! And when we are a recipient of his favour, we can't help but want to extend grace to others. We don't deserve anything good, but we are still eligible for his goodness in Jesus. And our part is not to focus on our own works and be independent from God, but to focus on Jesus, and receiving all that we need from Him.

The more righteous-conscious we are, the more of God's undeserved favour we will experience. When the accuser's voice comes to show us our failings, **that's** the time to turn to Jesus, who qualifies us. The fight of faith is the fight to believe that you are made righteous by faith and not by works. Paul speaks of his own achievements under the law, and says, *"I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith."* (Phil 3:8)

Your own righteousness can only give you the occasional confidence to ask for God's favour, depending on how well you think you have done, but the other gives you confidence all the time to access His unmerited favour.

So today, believe and expect good things to happen to you, because of what Jesus did on the cross. Ask God for big things and reach out to that wonderful destiny that He has for you and your family. **His righteousness** is your right to God's unmerited favour. Don't let any voice of accusation tell you otherwise!

God bless you till next week, when we continue our study of God's wonderful, unmerited favour.

Unmerited Favour

Chapter 7

Last week we spoke about what gives us the right to God's unmerited favour in our lives. And we said that it is the righteousness of Jesus that he gives us as believers, that gives us that privilege. We need to resist the voice of the accuser, who wants to prevent us from believing God for great things.

We continue this study of *Unmerited Favour* by Joseph Prince. And today we want to discuss the peace of God that is part of that favour. Firstly, peace is not the absence of trouble and challenges in your life. But we can experience true peace with Jesus, in the midst of the biggest crisis. It is a supernatural response.

The world defines peace and harmony based on what is happening in the sensory realm, eg some might describe peace as, lying in a hammock on a white sandy beach. But the problem is that we cannot use our external surroundings to permanently influence the turmoil we feel inside. Only Jesus can touch your feelings and turn that turmoil into His peace. He always transforms from the inside out.

There was once an art competition, on the subject of "peace", and everyone drew pictures of sunsets, still life, peaceful landscapes, and moonlight walks. But one artist painted a terrible storm, with lightning and waves of the sea lashing against the rocks and the craggy edges of a cliff with thunderous force. But he painted a family of eagles snug in their nest, hidden in the crevice in the cliff, and the young chicks oblivious to the storm, dozing off in the shelter of mother eagle's wings. Needless to say, that artist won the prize, as he accurately depicted real peace.

Psalm 91:1 says, *“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty ... He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge.”* There is no safer place than under the protective shelter of your Saviour's wings, no matter what the raging storm may be around you. David also said in Psalm 57:1, *“Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, for in you my soul takes refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed.”*

We know that God promised us that no weapons from the enemy formed against us will prosper. He did not promise that weapons would not be formed against us, but that they need not defeat or hurt us. Today there are many things that come against us: deadly viruses, sicknesses, wars, unrest, disasters, financial collapse, violence, mounting debt, crashing stock markets, companies going bankrupt, broken relationships. What are the keys to peace in these circumstances? One important key is to start your day with Jesus, rather than with the bad news on television, and to end the day with a few moments connecting with Jesus. Even as you lie in bed, thank him for the day and declare his protection and rejuvenating power over your spirit, soul and body as you rest.

Secondly, we need to be watchful of our eye- and ear-gates. Let us be careful of our TV diet. We can spend much time watching TV, listening to people's opinions or their knowledge on a subject, but in the end these do nothing for us. It is like the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. On the other hand, when we feed on the person of Jesus, the tree of life, then His wisdom, peace and joy will flow into our lives.

Prov 4:20-22 says, *“My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words. Do not let them out of your sight,*

keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body." He tells us to guard what we hear and see and what is in our hearts. Rather listen to the gracious words of Jesus, and see the presence of Jesus, and meditate on what you have heard and seen in Jesus. The result will be life and health to us. Our mortal bodies become infused with His resurrection life and power!

Sometimes we can overdose ourselves on world news and developments that can make our hearts troubled. We know that the number one killer today, is stress. It can cause all sorts of imbalances in our bodies, like premature ageing, rashes, gastric pains and even abnormal growths. Doctors tell us that certain physical symptoms are "psychosomatic" in nature, because these symptoms are brought about by psychological problems, such as stress. Joseph Prince says, "*Stress is not from God. Peace is from Him!*"

Jesus said, "*My peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*" Jesus spoke Aramaic Hebrew, and he would have used the word, *Shalom*, which is a very rich word. According to the Hebrew Lexicon, it means, *completeness, safety, soundness in body, welfare, health, prosperity, peace, quiet, tranquility, contentment, peace in human relationships, peace with God and peace from war.* What a powerful word!

That is what Jesus promises us - His completeness, His safety, His soundness, his welfare, His peace and quiet, His contentment, and His peace with God and in human relationships – all these are part of our covenant inheritance. Can you picture your life free from all regrets, anxieties and worries?

As you listen to this teaching, I believe that Jesus is already beginning a work in your heart, to free you from all your fears,

whatever they may be. It may be the fear of failure, fear of people's opinions of you, financial fear, or even the fear that God is not with you. The tragedy about all these fears, is that they began with a lie, that you have somehow believed. Perhaps you have believed that God is angry and displeased with you, and that His presence is far from you. But the Bible says, *“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.”* 1 John 4:18. The Bible tells us that when you have a revelation that God loves you perfectly, (not because of what you have done, but because of what Jesus did for you), then Jesus (perfect love) will cast out every fear, every lie, every anxiety, every doubt and every worry that God is against you. And the more you have a revelation of how Jesus made you perfect, the more you will be free to receive His complete shalom in your life!

You may fear that you will not be able to sustain your family financially with all the escalating costs. But the lie of the enemy is that there is no solution to that problem and that God is not able to help you. But Paul says in Phil 4:19, *“My God shall meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”* Believe the truth that God is able and will help you, and receive His peace.

Know and believe that as a believer in Jesus Christ, you have absolute peace with God. The new covenant of grace is also known as the covenant of peace. God says this to you today in Isaiah 54: 9-10 *“So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again. Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed”, says the Lord, who has compassion on you.”*

God is on your side. The shalom of Jesus is there for you. All of heaven's resources are there for you. Even if you are caught in the midst of a storm right now, remember the little eaglets nestled under the wings of their protector and provider, sleeping soundly in spite of the storm. *And may the shalom of God, which transcends all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* Go in peace and rest in His shalom!

God bless you till next week, when we continue our study of God's wonderful, unmerited favour.

Unmerited Favour

Chapter 8

Last week we spoke about the peace of God that is part of our inheritance as new covenant believers. We said we should watch our eye- and ear gates and not feed ourselves constantly on fear-provoking input. The shalom Jesus spoke about is all-encompassing and drives out all fear, no matter what difficulties you may be facing. You **can** walk in continuous peace.

We continue our study of God's unmerited favour, and today we look at the difference between the old and new covenants, and see how much better this new covenant is. We as believers are no longer under the old covenant based on works, but under the new covenant of unmerited favour through Jesus' finished work. Hebrews 8:13 says, *"By calling this covenant 'new', He has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear."* God actually found fault with the old covenant, as it says the NKJV in v 7 of that chapter, *"For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for another"*.

So if there had been nothing wrong with the old, why would God give his only precious Son to be brutally crucified on the cross, to be publicly humiliated and to suffer, if there wasn't something wrong with the old? He wanted to make a **new** covenant with us. In all of Israel's 150 years under the law, not a single person was made righteous by the law. Even the best of them, like David, failed. But praise God for the new covenant, where even the worst can be saved!

Often God's people are defeated by their lack of knowledge of all the benefits that Jesus has bought for us at the cross. Ps 103:1-3 says, *"Bless the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost*

being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord O my soul, and forget not all his benefits – who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.” We see that all these benefits include, forgiveness of all your sins, health, divine protection, love and favour, good things and the renewal of youth. God wants us to remember all the benefits Jesus bought for us, and He enjoys it when He sees us enjoying these gifts and blessings

Listen to this true story of a man who visited a poor, old lady who was dying. As he sat next to her bed in the cramped old, dilapidated home, a single frame hung on her spartan wall and caught his attention. Instead of a picture, it held a yellowed piece of paper with writing on it. He asked the lady about it and she replied, *“Well, I can't read, so I don't know what it says. But a long time ago, I used to work for a very wealthy man who had no family. Just before he died, he gave me this piece of paper and I've kept it in remembrance of him – for the past 40 to 50 years now.”* The man took a closer look at the framed contents, hesitated a moment, then said, *“Do you know that this is actually the will and testament of that man? It names you as the sole beneficiary of all his wealth and property!”* For close to 50 years this lady had eked out a meager existence – her ignorance had robbed her of a life of luxury and wealth she could have enjoyed. What a sad story, but it plays itself out again and again in the lives of believers, who do not realise the inheritance Jesus bequeathed them when He gave up his life on the cross.

In Hosea 4:6 God lamented, *“My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.”* Let not our ignorance rob us of our covenant rights in Jesus today.

But let's look at what exactly is a covenant? It is more than a contract or legal agreement. A covenant is always inaugurated by blood, and the new covenant is based on – Jesus' blood. The whole Old Testament must be read with Jesus as the key to unlock the precious gems hidden in the Word. In the Old Testament Jesus is concealed, but fully revealed in the New Testament. Let's be faithful to study the Word, and to understand clearly that Jesus came to give us abundant life, and took upon His own body on the cross, all our sickness, pain and poverty. If we don't understand the full truth of the new covenant, we will easily believe any teaching that tells us that we need to do good works to make us righteous and acceptable to God.

So who is the law for then? 1 Timothy 1:8-10 says, *“We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that the law is made not for the righteous, but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers ...”* So the law is not for you, the believer, who has been made righteous in Christ! It is not applicable to someone who is under the new covenant of grace. In Galatians 3:24 Paul says, *“Therefore the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”* It is to show us that in and of ourselves, we will never be able to reach God's perfect standards. Therefore the law leads us to depend on Jesus, who makes us righteous through his finished work. So the law was never designed for man to keep; and no man has been able to, or will ever be able to keep it.

The law **demands** from man, but grace **imparts** to man. The law **condemns** the sinner, but grace makes the sinner **righteous**. The law brings **death**, but grace brings abundant **life**. The law was designed to **expose** all your deficiencies, but grace points you to

your **sufficiency in Christ**. Under the law God **left** when man failed, but under grace God will **never leave** you nor forsake you even when you fail. The law makes you **sin-conscious** and **self-conscious**, but grace makes you **righteousness-conscious** and **Jesus-conscious**. The law tells you that you **have failed**, but grace shows you how you are **more than a conqueror** in Christ. The law is about what you must **do**, but grace shows us what Jesus **has already done**.

We must be careful of teaching that slips in and out of the two covenants, as it leads to confusion and God calls it “mixture”. Mixture teaches that God is happy with us sometimes, but at other times, our fellowship is broken because of our failures. Grace will lose its essence of being undeserved when we still need to depend on ourselves and our works to earn God's presence and favour. What man calls “balance”, God calls “mixture”. Rob Rufus says this mixture is a poisonous cocktail.

Be discerning when you hear a preacher tell you that “*God gives you sickness to teach you a lesson.*” Always ask if it is in line with the new covenant of God's unmerited favour? Why would God give you sickness when Jesus took every sickness and disease upon His own body on the cross? Believe with full assurance that sickness is not from God. You can have faith to be healed from it! Instead of thinking that God is against you, you realise that He is fully on your side and wants you to experience abundant life.

2 Timothy 2:15 says, “*do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth*”. Know the full truth of this full inheritance Jesus paid for.

Let's praise God for the new covenant. Throughout the book of Hebrews it tells us that it is a better covenant, with better things, a better hope, with better promises, has a better sacrifice, to give us better possessions, to gain us a better resurrection, it speaks a better word, and promises us one day a better country. Halleluyah – this new covenant is so much better!

God bless you till next week, when we continue our study of God's wonderful, unmerited favour.

Unmerited Favour

Chapter 9

The last time we spoke about the new covenant based on Jesus' finished work with better promises and better everything. We also said that our ignorance can rob us of enjoying our inheritance as believers. We need to study the Word so that we can appropriate by faith what is ours. And let us be careful of teaching that is a mixture of law and grace.

We are studying Joseph Prince's book, *Unmerited Favour*, and today we look at God's story that began with the Abrahamic covenant of grace. After that came the covenant of law and lastly the new covenant, which is a covenant of unmerited favour.

John 1:17 tells us, "*For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*" Apparently in the Greek language, "*grace and truth*" are seen as one unit - synomous. They are both embodied in Jesus. Verse 14 of the same chapter also says, "*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*" Grace is not a teaching; it is a Person. You cannot separate truth from grace and grace from truth as they are embodied in the person of Jesus Christ.

But let us begin with Abraham, who lived more than 400 years before the law was given, and God related to Abraham based on his faith in God's grace and not on his obedience to law. Rom 4:2-3 says, "*If in fact Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about – but not before God. What does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.*" This era of the Abrahamic covenant continued, and when

the Israelites journeyed from Egypt to Mount Sinai, they were under this covenant of grace. The Lord delivered them supernaturally out of Egypt, not because of their goodness and faithfulness, but because of the blood of the lamb (the picture of the Lamb of God) on the doorposts on the night of the Passover, and because of God's goodness and faithfulness. Notice that the people of Israel had complained right from the beginning, again and again. When the Egyptian army was at their heels, they said, *"Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die?"* God saved them from the enemy. Then they complained when the waters were bitter. God sweetened the water. They grumbled about food and meat, and God gave them manna and quail. But we notice that during this time, none of the people of Israel died, even though they complained against God's appointed leadership. This is a picture of pure grace. The blessings and provisions that they received were dependent on God's goodness and not on their obedience.

God's desire was to have relationship with them and to bless them. Even after all their grumbling, He told Moses to tell the people, *"You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all the nations you will be my treasured possession ... you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."* Ex 19:4

But the tragedy is that the people of Israel wanted to please God based on their own performance, and they did not believe that God's favour was because of grace. They said, *"All that God commands us, we are well able to perform!"* (v8) In other words, they were saying, *"Assess us on our own merits. Bless us based on our obedience, because we are well able to do what you have said."* From that time

onwards, God changed his tone with them. He distanced himself from them and told Moses to command them not to come near the holy mountain. Once God's grace was rejected, and they presumed upon their own righteousness, God drew back from them. *"I am going to come to you in a thick cloud ... whoever touches the mountain will be put to death. He shall surely be stoned or shot with arrows..."*(v 13)

Previously God's presence was with them in the pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. All their needs were met because of God's faithfulness to the Abrahamic covenant based on grace. Now he could no longer deal with them in the same way after they chose to come under a different covenant – one based on their performance and obedience. And then God gave them the 10 commandments and the law was introduced. And were they able to perform all God commanded them? No, right at the foot of Mount Sinai already, they created a golden calf and worshiped it as the god who brought them out of Egypt!

The moment they relied on their own ability to keep God's commandment in Ex 20:2, *"You shall have not other gods before me"*, they broke the very first commandment. Why? Paul told us, *"The power of sin is the law"*. (1 Cor 15:56) The more you try to keep the law by your own efforts, the more it will bring forth what it was designed to bring forth – your failings and sin and death. This will happen **until** you realise that you cannot meet God's perfect standard on your own and until you **cast** yourself totally on his grace and goodness. After the exchange of covenants, when next they complained again about food and water, the Lord sent fiery serpents among them that bit the people and many of the people of Israel died." God simply lifted his hand of protection from over them and they died.

We know the passages in Deuteronomy where God gave a list of wonderful blessings in every area of their lives IF they kept his commands, and a list of terrible curses, IF they didn't keep his

commands. The people of Israel asked for it when they boasted in their ability to be blessed based on their own works and when they rejected the Abrahamic covenant. So God had to humble them and show them His perfect standards that no man could ever maintain.

Immediately after the Ten commandments were given, God told Moses to build an altar of burnt offerings, but they were to build it, *“not with dressed stones (cut stones) for you will defile it if you use a tool on it. And do not go up to my altar on steps, lest your nakedness be exposed.”* Ex 20: 25, 26. This is because God already had Jesus in mind, and the whole Old Testament was to become a picture or shadow of what was still coming. We know that God sent his own Son, Jesus, to fulfill this law perfectly on our behalf at the cross. The fact of uncut stones without tools, tells us that the cross had nothing human effort, for that would profane it. And man cannot gain access to God's unmerited favour by his own steps. Man's own self-efforts to deserve God's favour will only expose his own weakness and nakedness. Favour comes only from Jesus' work on the cross. You cannot add to His work nor can you deserve it by depending on your obedience.

And the offerings of perfect lambs that the people of Israel had to offer, were also a shadow of the perfect Lamb of God, who took upon His own body all the curses and full payment for all the sins of humanity. But Jesus also transferred his righteousness to us. So once you accept Jesus as your personal Saviour, you are no longer a sinner, but all your sins – past, present and future – have been paid for at the cross once and for all. Jesus does not need to be crucified ever again. His one perfect payment cleared your lifetime of sins! Now under this new covenant, through Him, we can completely depend on His unmerited favour for every blessing in our lives. Jesus did a complete work on the cross and declared, *“It is finished!”*

This is God's wonderful story of love and grace – for those who will believe and receive it. Let us never go back to wanting to please God by our own effort and obedience. Jesus fulfilled the law and we now walk by faith, each day, in His grace and righteousness. And yes, we obey him because we love Him.

God bless you till next week, when we continue our study of God's wonderful, unmerited favour.

Unmerited Favour

Chapter 10

Last week we spoke about God's wonderful story of grace. God had found fault with the old covenant and had in his heart the new covenant through Jesus. Anyone who believes and receives his grace, can live in the righteousness and blessing Jesus paid for on the cross.

We are studying the teaching of *Unmerited Favour* by Joseph Prince, and today we look at how to live free from condemnation. In the Old Testament the people of Israel knew that if they failed in just one law, they were guilty of breaking the whole law, or all the laws! No man could or can keep the law perfectly – only Jesus met the full righteous requirements of the law on our behalf. God judged them not only on their outward keeping of the law, but their hearts as well. The law is an impossible standard and was designed to silence all man's efforts to earn God's blessings. That is why the people in the old covenant needed to make offerings and sacrifices daily, to cover their utter failure.

Now the Pharisees had brought God's law down to a level that they thought they could uphold, so they could boast in their ability to keep it. But Jesus came to show them that God's law was an impossible standard for man. He said that the law had to be kept outwardly as well as inwardly. When a man had lust for a woman in his heart, or if anyone hated his brother, God saw it as adultery and murder!

Rom 3:10,19,20 says, *“There is no one righteous, not even one...now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather through the law we become*

conscious of sin.” So the Ten Commandments were never given to stop sin and bring holiness, but to expose man's sin. Paul says, “I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “Do not covet.” But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire.” Look at this example. A group of boys walk past a row of glass greenhouses. They never had an interest in them before, but then they see a notice, saying, “Fragile glass. Do not throw stones. Trespassers will be prosecuted.” Suddenly they stop and dare each other to do exactly what the sign tells them not to do. Paul goes on to say in vs 9-10, “Once I was alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life, actually brought death.”

That is why, when we preach the law, there will be a revival of sin, and it will also bring death. But listen to Col 2:14-15, *“He forgave all our sins, having cancelled the written code with its regulations (or: having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us). He took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”* So when the law was nailed to the cross, the enemy and his demons were disarmed! The devil uses the law as a weapon to accuse you, to heap condemnation on you and give you a sense of guilt and distance from God. But he can no longer do it, because in the new covenant, we are free from the law! But many believers are defeated by their lack of knowledge and the enemy takes advantage of their ignorance, and continues to condemn and revive sin in their lives.

You see, the law has no power to make you holy and good,

but is only like a mirror – it shows God's perfect holiness and shows our inability to keep his standards. If you fully subject yourself to the law, it will drive you to the end of yourself and you will come to a place where you have a clear revelation that you cannot save yourself! In Rom 7:24 Paul cried, *“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”* And his answer, *“Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!”* So we, too, are made righteous by the blood of Jesus.

But we as believers can still be tempted to have sinful desires and sinful thoughts. What then is the solution to temptations, sinful desires and thoughts? The answer is in Rom 8:1, *“Therefore there is **now** no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”* In our temptation we need to remember, that in the present tense *“**now**”*, we are not condemned. Are we then to sit still and entertain those sinful thoughts? Of course not. The point is, sin cannot take root in a person who is full of the consciousness that he is righteous in Christ. In your temptation, begin to confess and believe that you are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus! That will give you the power to rise above it and to rest in your righteous identity in Christ. In your temptation, you remain conscious that Jesus is still with you and that you are righteous in Him apart from your works.

Many people who have been bound by destructive habits, have found this key, and been set free. They have found that, as they confessed this every time they were being tempted, then bit by bit, they began to believe that they were righteous, and not to accept the condemnation for the past mistakes; and more and more they became free from the very addictions that bound them! We need to believe that God loves us unconditionally, despite our failures and imperfections. He does not want us to sin, because sin will destroy a person. But even if you have failed, you must

know, there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus and your sins are washed away by his blood. When God looks at you, He does not see you in your failures. From the moment you accept Jesus as your Saviour, he sees you in the risen Christ, seated at His right hand! As Jesus is spotless and without blame, so are you! Keep that as your focus.

Grace may not produce immediate results, and your life may not change outwardly overnight. But if you let God pour his love and grace into your life, this eventually will transform you from the inside out! If you walk in this truth, the fruits are sure and permanent! It is vital for you to receive the gift of “*no condemnation*”, because that is what will give you the power to overcome your weakness, destructive habits and addictions.

If you believed that God condemned you every time you failed, would you run to Him for help? No, but He does not condemn - He loves and forgives. You may be at the lowest point in your life. Realise this one powerful truth – God does not condemn or despise you. He loves you and can turn your life around completely.

Look how Jesus gave a sinner the power to sin no more. He defended the woman caught in adultery. He looked tenderly into her eyes and asked, “*Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?*” She said, “*No Lord.*” And Jesus said, “*Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more.*” That was the secret to her not sinning any longer – the fact that Jesus did not condemn her! That is pure grace. He did not say, “*IF you stop sinning I will not condemn you,*” but he already saw the cross; “*I do not condemn you, **NOW** you can go and sin no more.*” Rom 6:14 also says, “*For sin shall not be your master, **because** you are not under law, but under grace.*” When you know that Christ has made you righteous and perfect apart from your works, that will give you the ability to overcome every sinful temptation, habit and addiction!

All your sins have been nailed to the cross, and all the law that condemned you, also. You are now free to sin no more, and experience victory over every sinful bondage in your life!

God bless you till next week, when we continue our study of God's wonderful, unmerited favour.

Unmerited Favour

Chapter 11

Last week we spoke about living free from condemnation, which is the secret to getting free from bondages, addictions, and sinful thought patterns. We said, the law was nailed to the cross and the enemy was disarmed. But the devil still accuses God's people, who often do not understand this, and they feel condemned and sometimes distant from God. But freedom is directly linked to our believing that God no longer condemns us.

We are studying Joseph Prince's book, *Unmerited Favour*, and today we look at transforming the next generation. Now Jesus said that the whole law can be summed up in this: *"to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and all your mind, and all your strength."* But however sincere we are, we simply cannot love God so perfectly. But do you know what God did? *"God SO loved the world that He gave His only Son..."* The word **"so"** speaks of the intensity of his love. He says, *"Let me show you how to love perfectly."* Rom 5:7–9 says, *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we now have been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!"* The cross is God's demonstration of His perfect love and His perfect grace toward us, for it was while we were still sinners that Jesus died for us. It was not because of **our** perfect love, but because of **His** perfect love. 1 John 4:10 says, *"This is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."*

So let us raise up a new generation of believers, that are impacted by God's unmerited favour and that boasts in His love. And as His loved ones, you then are able *"to love one another."* You cannot love others when you have not first

been filled with His love. And when you are overflowing with His love, you effortlessly love others. Rom 13:10 says, *“Love does no harm to his neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”*

The youth are tired of a religion of rules, even though preachers may be sincere. But how **do** we impact our youth to deal with temptation? The internet is a real danger today. Well, Joseph was able to **flee** from temptation when he was in Potiphar's house, because he had a living relationship with God. No laws governed him – it was even before the law was given. Paul's instructions in the new covenant is to, *“**Flee** from youthful lusts and to pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace.”* (2 Tim 2: 22) If internet pornography is a temptation, then let's teach our young people not to put confidence in their own ability, to try to resist the temptation, but to flee from it instead. Parents, at the same time, you can make pragmatic changes by placing your home computers in the living rooms and not in your child's bedroom. And young children don't need internet-connecting cell phones.

If you are a teenager or young adult who is dating, you must learn to flee temptation like Joseph did. Don't go to quiet places alone or lock yourselves in rooms. Remember, God designed sex to be enjoyed within the marriage covenant, and he is not robbing you of fun. He loves you too much to see you go from one sexual relationship to another, and end up feeling used, cheated, empty and broken. He loves you too much to see you suffering from sexually transmitted diseases, or to see you go through an unwanted pregnancy and become a parent before you are ready. God's destiny is for you to enjoy marriage with someone you can give yourself totally to, with whom you can have a blessed family with beautiful children in due season. I want to say to the youth, *“Trust God – don't rush into having sex before*

marriage.” But know this: if your past was a failure in this regard, Jesus' blood washes you whiter than snow and you can have a new beginning. Believe that God has an incredible heart of love for you and a wonderful destiny. When you receive Jesus and his love into your life, you will learn to love yourself and you will not want to inflict harm on yourself, by experimenting with sex, or drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and other destructive activities. The grace and love of God brings about a restraint, that is supernatural. Grace is our only hope for transforming the next generation.

Throwing law at the youth will only stir up the flesh to rebel. Don't start with grace and end up with the law. Don't start with the new covenant, only to turn back to the old. When you are established in his grace, you will experience a tremendous sense of confidence and security in Christ. You won't feel as if you are jumping in and out of God's favour, that sometimes He is near, and other times He is far away, sometimes He is satisfied and other times He is angry with you. But in fact, you can have access to His blessings all the time, simply because of Jesus and His finished work on the cross.

Teaching rules only instills fear and links human achievement to God's favour. But rather ask this question, *“Is God satisfied with the cross of Jesus?”* Yes, he is completely satisfied. And we, as believers, are in Christ – so He is completely satisfied with us!

God will not punish the believer again – not because He has gone soft on sin, but because all our sins have already been punished in the body of Jesus. If you have his Spirit living in you, He does not assess you on what you have done, but on what Jesus has done! It is not cheap grace. This new covenant reality came at a heavy price – Jesus' very life. Don't let anyone make you think that you need to pay for your own sins. Don't be deceived by the lie that your eternal salvation is uncertain and shakable! His love never leaves us.

You will agree with me that if you were to interview random people anywhere, most would probably have heard about the Ten

Commandments, but most would know nothing about the new covenant of grace that came through Jesus. Isn't it sad that the world identifies Christianity by the laws that are obsolete, and not by the unmerited favour that Christ died to give us? It is no wonder we are losing a generation of young people, because the law holds no attraction. The law will not impart to them their precious identity in Christ. The law will not give them the strength to abstain from premarital sex, or from getting into drug abuse, or help them from losing their sexual identity. Only God's sacrifice on the cross can give them their new identity as a new creation in Jesus! There is a lost and dying world outside there, desperately needing to hear about God's unmerited love and favour.

I believe that in Jesus, our young men can develop supernatural self-control to manage their raging hormones and flee youthful lusts – not by their own will-power, but through Jesus' power flowing through them. They will know that Jesus has an awesome destiny laid out for them, and the desire to be in gangs will disappear when they accept Jesus' love for them. That is the power of God's grace and His unconditional acceptance through the cross.

It is not too late to reach out to our young people with arms of grace and embrace them with the true gospel of Jesus. Let us stop knocking them with the Ten Commandments, but start giving them a revelation of Jesus. Let us be a people who, ourselves are full of grace and mercy, full of the person of Jesus, His beauty, His love and His perfect work at the cross. Who then can even consider suicide, if they understand and receive such love from the Father?

Right now, if you are a young person listening in, I want you to know that all your answers are found in the person of Jesus. He suffered, and died for you. Receive him into your life today. Whatever confusion you may be experiencing at the moment, Jesus will never give up on you! Find your identity in Him and He will give you a new beginning, a fresh start, an exciting life with him! Your new identity will be determined by your new birth, not by your behaviour. Your future in Jesus will get brighter each day. He will never leave you nor forsake you, no matter what mistakes you may have made. You can begin your new life of unmerited favour and success.

God bless you till next week, when we continue our study of God's wonderful, unmerited favour.

Unmerited Favour

Chapter 12

Last week we spoke about reaching the youth of our generation with the message of grace. We said rules and laws will not draw the youth to Jesus. But his love and mercy will touch hearts and bring freedom from any bondage. Young people will find a new identity in Him.

Well, today is our last day in this study of Unmerited Favour from the book by Joseph Prince. We will be looking at our part in the New covenant. What are the terms of this new covenant? Let's read Hebrew 8:10-13: *"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." By calling this covenant 'new', he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and ageing will soon disappear."*

The old covenant is all about what **you** must do, but the new covenant is full of what **God** will do. So what are the laws that He will put in us? Well, John 13:34 says that He has given us a new commandment – to love one another as He has loved us. In Romans 3:27, Paul mentions the law of faith. So those are the laws He will put into our hearts – the royal law of love and the law of faith.

When you begin to experience God's love and favour in your life, knowing that you don't deserve it, you will fall in love with Jesus. And when you are full of His love, that love will overflow into all your relationships – and with your spouse.

In fact it is only when you are filled with Jesus' love for you that you can fulfil the Eph 5:25 - *“Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.”*

Similarly when you are consumed by his love, you will not be consumed by murderous anger, even when you have been wronged, but will have the supernatural ability to forgive others. That is why Paul said in Romans 13:9-10, *“The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder, “Do not steal,” “Do not covet”, and whatever other commandments there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbour as yourself. Therefore **love** is the fulfilment of the law.”* The new covenant is all about having a living, dynamic and intimate relationship with Jesus. The law is inferior – it can only command you not to commit adultery, but it cannot make you love your spouse. Under law, a person can be faithful to his wife physically, but his heart can be cold toward her, and he can be fantasising about what he sees on the Internet. Under law, you can have a form of law-keeping, but under grace you will experience the power to love.

The law will not tell you how to save your marriage. But God will teach you how to love your wife. He may prompt you to say some words of encouragement and affirmation to her, or to show her more affection. As a new covenant believer, God speaks to you directly through His promptings by His Spirit. He has made it easy for you to know His will. If you want to serve the Lord and don't know where to start, ask yourself what is in your heart. You may feel a prompting to bless someone financially, or to visit someone who is ill. When you have this desire, do it, knowing that you have a brand-new heart that hears God, and that it is He who works in you both the willingness and the doing of it.

But the new covenant works only because of one thing: it is the last clause in Hebrews 8:12: *“For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”* NKJ. “No more” means there was a time God remembered our sins, even to punish them to the 3rd and 4th generations. Today God says emphatically, “No more!” and we know that this is because he remembered our sins in the body of His Son, Jesus. God cannot lie. **That** is why God can put his laws in our minds and our hearts, and all of us can know him and be led by Him!

So what is our part in this new covenant of grace? It is simply to **believe!** We are to believe in Jesus; to receive Him as our personal Saviour, who died for our sins; believe that he was punished in our place, and that all our sins - He remembers no more! Believe that you are made perfectly righteous by Jesus' finished work. If you don't believe this, it will be impossible for you to expect God to protect, provide and prosper you.

If the enemy can get you to believe the lie that you are not completely forgiven and keep you sin-conscious, he will be able to keep you defeated, condemned, fearful of God, and caught in a vicious circle of failure. If you do not believe Rom 8:12 that God does not remember your sins, you expect God to deal with you according to your sins. When something negative happens, your first thought is, *“I knew it – God is coming after me for what I did in the past.”* You were probably taught that you reap what you have sown. Today, as believers in the new covenant, we do not reap what we have sown. We enjoy the benefits of the heavy price Jesus paid. We sowed nothing, but through Jesus, we can reap every blessing. That is called unmerited favour!

In the new covenant, the Scriptures on sowing and reaping actually speak about money, eg Galatians 6:7-8: *“Anyone who received instruction in the word, must share all good things with this instructor. Do not be deceived: God is not mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from the nature will reap destruction, the one who sows to please the*

Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” Using money for self-indulgence leads to results that can decay, instead of being generous for the kingdom of God, that leads to results that are eternal.

In the old covenant it said, *“He who sows to the winds shall reap the whirlwind”* (in the context of sin), but Jesus, at the cross, changed everything. He reaped all the punishment of the sins that we sowed and we reaped all the blessings that He sowed. Believe that all your sins – past, present and future – have been forgiven. Colossians 2:13 also says, *“When you were dead in your sins and in the circumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us **all** our sins ...”* We have been forgiven once and for all, because Jesus, the High Priest, *“sacrificed for sins once for all”*. (Hebr 7:27)

Why is a revelation of your forgiveness so important? Because, if you have no confidence that your sins have been forgiven, then your eternal security and salvation will always hang in the balance. Secondly, you can never have the confidence to enjoy the Lord's presence, because you will constantly feel unworthy because of **your** assessment of your conduct. You will not have the boldness to ask God for big things or believe that He will give you success in your life. And thirdly, when you fail, you will believe that you are not “right” with God and that fellowship with Him has been cut off. You will feel your need to be remorseful and make amends before you can depend on Him again. You will constantly be on an emotional seesaw, in a cycle of feeling insecure, always hopping in and out of God's favour – and it all depends on how well you think you have performed, and you end up feeling like a total and complete hypocrite and failure.

As we close, let me say, while Jesus is ready to bless you, unbelief in His finished work will rob you of the ability to receive His goodness, blessings, unmerited favour and success in your life. The cross qualified you, but unbelief disqualifies you. So **believe** that you have been totally forgiven and are free to enjoy the new covenant blessings through His finished work!

God bless you till next week when we will start with another study together.

