



of Biblical Studies
Ephesians 2:4-9

SUCCESS IN LIFE THROUGH GOD'S UNMERITED FAVOR

COURSE COMMENTARY



1 John 4:17

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Course Requirements

- 1) Read Course Commentary
- 2) Take Mid Term Exam
- 3) Take Final Exam
- 4) Submit Exams to Dr. Gray@ graceESBS@bellsouth.net
- 5) Dr. Gray will email you your Course Grade

Success In Life Through Unmerited Favor

This course is all about Jesus. It is about His passionate love for you and His desire for you to experience success in your life. But before we go on, let me ask you this question:

Do you believe that Jesus is interested in your success?

Take a moment to reflect on this.

My dear brother or sister, I am so glad that we have the opportunity to talk about this today because I want you to know that Jesus delights in blessing you. It is His good pleasure to see you blessed in every area of your life! (Luke 12:32, Psalm 35:27) Now, don't put a limit on His blessings in your life. The blessings of the Lord are not (as some may erroneously believe) just seen in material things. Jesus is infinitely interested in your total well-being. He is interested in your family, career, fulfillment in life, marriage, ministry, and boy, does the list go on!

When it comes to your desires, hopes and dreams, there is no detail that is too minuscule, minute or insignificant for Jesus. Trust me, if it matters to you, it matters to Him! Even if you went to Him in prayer to remove that small pimple on your nose, He is not going to look at you and reply mockingly, "Hey buddy, don't you know that I've got a whole universe to run? Come to Me when you have a bigger prayer request." No way! A thousand times no!

Jesus will never ridicule or deride your concerns as petty. He is never dismissive or condescending. He is not like some of your so-called "friends," who may delight in poking fun at your shortcomings. If it bothers you, it bothers Him. Jesus is someone whom you can be completely real with. You can hang out with Him and be yourself, with no pretense and no play-acting. Jesus is ever-loving toward you and you can talk to Him about anything. He enjoys conversing with you about your dreams, aspirations and hopes. He wants to heal you of things in your past that you

may be struggling with. He is interested in your present challenges. He wants to weep with you when you are down and rejoice with you in all your victories.

Jesus is love and tenderness personified. Be careful not to confuse His tenderness with the effeminate and weak images that you have seen depicted in some traditional paintings of Him. He is tenderness and strength wrapped up in one. He is meekness and majesty, manhood and deity, velvet and steel. You see, sometimes, when we attempt to be assertive and strong, we bulldoze over people's feelings and end up hurting them with our words. When we attempt to be tender, we overdose on niceness and reduce ourselves to doormats to be taken advantage of by others.

Let's turn away from ourselves and look at Jesus. He could sternly force a pack of scheming Pharisees to back off in one instance, challenging them by saying, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." (John 8:7) In the very next moment, this same Jesus could look straight into the eyes of a broken woman caught in adultery, and with compassion resonating deeply in His voice, ask her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you? Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." (John 8:10-11)

This is our God!

He embodies all the heroic qualities that humanity pines for. But instead of seeking Jesus, many in the world have settled for cheap Hollywood imitations of heroism based on artificial ideals of "manliness."

In one moment, a tired Jesus could be fast asleep in a windswept fisherman's boat, oblivious to the rough Galilean waters crashing against the hapless vessel. But in the very next moment, you see Him staring unflinchingly at the boisterous waves, His well-toned carpenter's arms raised to the sky. With His single declaration of absolute authority over heaven and earth, the waves submitted and calmed instantaneously into a placid mirror of stillness. (Mark 4:37-39)

Jesus is 100 percent Man and at the same time 100 percent God. As Man, He understands and identifies with all that you have gone through, are going through

and will ever go through in this life. He knows, for example, what it means to be fatigued after a long day. But as a loving God, all His power, authority and resources are on your side.

Do you know that you are important to Jesus? Know with full assurance in your heart that Jesus knows you perfectly, and yet accepts and loves you perfectly. When you begin to understand that, you will realize that it is truly that unmerited favor, that favor from Jesus that you know you do not deserve, did not merit and you cannot earn for yourself, it is that, that will perfect every imperfection and weakness in your life. If you are facing challenges, such as lack in any area, addictions, fears, sicknesses or broken relationships, Jesus' unmerited favor will protect, deliver, prosper, bring restoration to and provide for you. His unmerited favor will transform you into wholeness, and it is the goodness of God, not your striving and self-efforts, that will lead you to live victoriously for His glory.

Several years ago, I shared with my church that there are essentially two ways in which you can go about your life. The first is to depend entirely on your self-efforts, and the other is to depend completely on the unmerited favor and blessings of God. As for me and my house, the choice is absolutely clear. I am leaning strong on His unmerited favor in every area of my life—my marriage, family, church and anything else that I may be involved in.

Now, you have a choice to make—to live your life based entirely on your own efforts, or based entirely on the unmerited favor of Jesus. There are only two ways—either you are depending on “deserved favor” through your self-efforts, or you are blessed by grace, which is unmerited favor, through the cross and the obedience of Jesus Christ! The first is the world's way. The second is God's way.

The world's way to success is based on meritocracy. God's way to success in the new covenant is in direct contradiction to that, and is based on His unmerited favor. You can't earn it. You can't deserve it. And you certainly can't merit it. It comes by way of God's grace and by the power of what was accomplished at Calvary. It goes against the grain of every world system you have ever learned or depended upon. God's ways are higher and they always lead to good and abiding success.

My dear brother or sister, there is no middle road. You cannot mix your own efforts with God's grace. Choose His unmerited favor and all the glory redounds to Jesus. Every success, opportunity, blessing or breakthrough, be it in your health, family or career—success in every aspect of your life—comes by His unmerited favor. It is never you!

“Now Dr. Charles, shouldn't there be a part for man to perform and another part for God to fulfill? Shouldn't man do his best and let God do the rest?”

I am really glad that you asked that question!

You see, when people say that man has a part to play, what they end up doing is to come up with a list of requirements that man needs to fulfill to qualify for God's blessings. They say things like, “In order for God to answer your prayers, you have to do this and do that, and not do this and not do that.” And all the while, this list of do's and don'ts to qualify one for God's blessings keeps growing.

Now, let's stop right there. Doesn't this list of requirements that you have to fulfill so that God will bless you sound awfully familiar to you? I believe that many of those who insist on these requirements are well-meaning, sincere people. But what they are doing is pointing others back to the old covenant of the law, whether knowingly or unknowingly!

That's how the Law of Moses works. Under the old covenant, God's blessings were contingent on man's fulfillment of a list of requirements. But we are no longer under the old covenant of the law.

That is not Christianity!

The new covenant that we are under today is based completely on the removal of our sins by the blood of Jesus! “For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:12-14) Depending on your own efforts to deserve favor from

God is considered “dead works.” It is God’s desire for us to depend wholly on the unmerited favor of Jesus.

Just to make it clear, it is not Charles Gray who is finding fault with the old covenant. God Himself said, “For if that first covenant [the covenant of law] had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second [the covenant of grace].” (Hebrews 8:7) The Christian life today is not based on what you are doing or not doing. The reality is that the Christian life is not a religion at all. It is about having a relationship based completely on receiving

WHAT GOD HIMSELF HAS DONE ON THE CROSS!

When you receive completely what Jesus has done for you, “your doing” will flow effortlessly. Hear what the apostle of grace, Paul, had to say about this: “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace [unmerited favor] of God which was with me.” (1 Corinthians 15:10) So my dear brother or sister, in answer to your question, I would say don’t worry about what “man’s part” is. Focus, like Paul, entirely on Jesus’ part—His grace and His unmerited favor upon your life—and you will end up being energized by the Lord to pray more, read the Bible more and serve both God and your community more, simply because the unmerited favor of God is not in vain in your life. You will also realize that even the outworking of all that you do is not of yourself, but it is by His grace overflowing in you.

Some people think that grace will compromise God’s holiness. Absolutely not! The standards that grace sets are much higher than the standards of the Law of Moses. When you are under grace, you will effortlessly fulfill and even surpass the expectations of the Law of Moses! Come on, are you getting this? If you can understand what I am saying in this introduction, you have already been blessed!

Now, let me bring this introduction to a close. I don’t know about you, but I feel the presence of Jesus as I write this to you. I have released what He has put in my heart for you. I want to give you a scripture premise for this book, because you

may be asking why a book that's supposed to be about unmerited favor is turning out to be all about Jesus!

If you have the Amplified Bible, turn to 2 Peter 1:2. It is important that you see this in God's Word yourself:

“May grace (God's favor) and peace (which is perfect well-being, all necessary good, all spiritual prosperity, and freedom from fears and agitating passions and moral conflicts) be multiplied to you in [the full, personal, precise, and correct] knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord”. —2 Peter 1:2, AMP

It really is that simple. The unmerited favor of God will flow like a mighty torrential river into every parched area of your life, be it your physical body, marriage, career or finances, when you see Jesus! The more you increase in the knowledge of our loving Savior Jesus Christ and His finished work at the cross, the more God's unmerited favor will be multiplied in your life. And it is His unmerited favor that will cause you to enjoy success beyond your natural intelligence, qualifications and ability!

There are many good writings by great men of God on favor, but what I want you to see in this course is that God's unmerited favor is not a topic. It is not a teaching.

GOD'S UNMERITED FAVOR IS THE GOSPEL!

God's unmerited favor is not a subject. It is a PERSON, AND HIS NAME IS JESUS. When you have Jesus, you have unmerited favor! Jesus and unmerited favor do not exist separately. Unmerited favor is embodied in His entire being and in His finished work at Calvary.

It is unfortunate that the word “grace” in the modern church has been made into a theological subject or classified as a doctrine. In the modern vernacular, the word “grace” has also been abused and devalued. For example, you are given “five

minutes' grace" before parking charges are levied when you drive into a pay parking lot. O, how that cheapens the word "grace"!

To help the modern reader understand the fullness of grace, I am going to use the words "unmerited favor" and "grace" interchangeably in this book because grace is the undeserved, unearned and unmerited favor of God. To help you see grace in a fresh and new light, whenever I quote scriptures in this course commentary and the word "grace" appears, I will add in parentheses, "unmerited favor." I want you to begin to understand and see grace (unmerited favor) in its fullness.

This course is about your supernatural advantage for a successful life. By the end of this book, I trust that you will indeed begin to believe that God is personally interested in your success. You are His precious child and He wants to see you succeed and reign in life. When you believe that, you will also start to depend on His unmerited favor for success in every area of your life.

It is my prayer that as you dive into the pages of this course, that you will start seeing more of Jesus and start experiencing His unmerited favor in an unprecedented way. Get ready to experience God's supernatural success through His unmerited favor today!

Chapter One: The Definition Of Success

The oppressive Egyptian sun blazes down on the crowded market. The distinctive scent of aromatic spices wafts over the countless rows of merchants calling out their wares and treasures brought here from far and wide. Looking over the crowd, you will find a colorful assortment of people: Dancers, musicians, thieves, busy housewives, pickpockets and wealthy landlords, all gathered here shopping, bargaining, eyeing over and sifting through the countless objects on display. Everything, from the intricate creations of precious metals to livestock, has a price. In fact, a slave can be yours for 20 pieces of silver. There are no rules here for fair exchange. A top bid will get you what you desire. An inferior one will leave you empty-handed.

Amid this hustle and bustle in the main square by the fountain stands a young man of about 17 years old, his neck and his hands bound firmly with coarse ropes. From the rope burns across his wrists and around his neck, you can tell that the merchants have not been kind as they hurried to reach the market in time to put their prize on display. They have heard a rumor that Potiphar, a high-ranking official from Pharaoh's court, is planning to make a purchase today.

The young man is dazed from so many days of walking. His legs keep buckling beneath him, his arms are weary from the constant tugging and his mouth is parched from the dry desert winds. He is in a foreign land where the people speak in an incomprehensible tongue. With nothing to his name, not even a loincloth to cover his modesty, he is bound and displayed, completely naked. In a short while, he would be inspected like an animal against his will, and sold into a lifetime of slavery.

And yet, God Himself calls this young man, named Joseph, a successful man!

Now, think about this for a moment, and imagine yourself in the scene of this Egyptian market. If you were among the many curious spectators and bystanders in

the main square, would you consider this young man who is about to be sold into slavery “a successful man”?

Of course not!

Yet, God says in His own words that Joseph was a successful man.

Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there. The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. —Genesis 39:1–2

Success Is A Result Of Who You Have

God’s definition of success is contrary to the world’s definition. Corporate America measures success based on what you have done, what you have accomplished and what you have accumulated. It is based entirely on you focusing all your time, energy and resources in meriting titles and collecting accomplishments.

Now, we have witnessed how this self-indulgent accumulation has led to the subprime crisis, the decimation of investment banks and a widespread international financial meltdown.

My dear brother or sister, I want you to begin to see that the world’s model of success is unstable and built upon a foundation that is shakable. It may have the outward appearance of the good life, but it is temporal, and we have all seen for ourselves how the world’s transient wealth can dissipate like smoke and easily slip away like the shifting sands in the desert.

It is the presence of the Lord in your life that makes you a success!

From Genesis 39:2, it is clear that success is not what you have, but rather who you have! Joseph literally had nothing materially, but at the same time, he had everything because the Lord was with him. The material things that you have accumulated or are feverishly trying to amass do not make you a success. It is the presence of the Lord in your life that makes you a success!¹

We need to learn to stop pursuing things and to start pursuing Him. God sees your relationship with Him as the only thing that you need for every success in your life. I can't imagine starting in a worse place than Joseph. He was completely naked. He had nothing! No bank accounts, no educational qualifications, no natural connections with people of influence, nothing. Thank God the Bible records a picture of Joseph who began with nothing, so that you and I can have hope today. If you think that like Joseph, you have nothing, well, you can start believing in the power of the presence of the Lord in your life. Start looking to Jesus and claim that promise in that scripture for yourself!

Let me show you how you can make this promise personal in your life. Insert your name here into God's promise for you:

“The Lord is with _____, and I am a successful person.”

Now, say this aloud to yourself. Read it out loud a hundred times if you need to, and begin to see this as your reality. Stick this promise on your mirror, and every morning when you brush your teeth, remind yourself that today, as you go to work, as you go to school, as you start the day caring for your children at home (or do whatever it is that you need to do), the Lord is with you. And because He is with you, **YOU ARE ALREADY A SUCCESS!** When you have Jesus in your life, you are no longer trying to be a success; you **ARE** a success!

¹ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 3.

Saving You Is Jesus' Job Description

Let me share with you a powerful truth hidden in the birth of Jesus. When Mary was engaged to Joseph, before they shared any intimacy as husband and wife, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph, being a just man and not willing to make Mary a public spectacle, thought of a way to “put her away secretly.” (Matthew 1:19)

Keep in mind that at that point, Joseph did not yet know that the unborn child was of the Holy Spirit. He thought that Mary had committed fornication. Yet, this righteous man was not willing to expose her publicly. In those days, if you were found to have had sexual relations before marriage, they would stone you to death. That was the culture and law of the Jewish people at that time. But Joseph loved his wife-to-be, Mary, and wanted to protect her dignity and preserve her life as best he could.

Now, as Joseph was contemplating these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:20-21) The name “Jesus” is Yeshua in Hebrew, which contains an abbreviation for Yahweh, the name of God in Hebrew. The name “Jesus” literally means “Yahweh is our Savior” or “The Lord is our Savior”! What a beautiful name!

Every time you call the name of Jesus, the name that is above every other name, you are calling God Himself to save you. Saving you is Jesus' job description! Whatever the challenge or circumstance, whatever crisis you are in—physically, financially or emotionally—you can call on the name of Jesus and Almighty God Himself will save you!

My brothers and sisters, you can take time to know the names of God, which He revealed under the old covenant, such as Elohim, El Shaddai, El Elyon, Jehovah-Jireh, Jehovah-Rophe and Jehovah-Nissi. You can do a complete study on the

names of God. I am not against that at all. I teach on the names of God in my church as well, but all these names will mean nothing to you if you don't know that God Almighty Himself, Jesus, wants to save you first from all your sins, then from all your challenges.

God can be all powerful, but if you are not confident that He is interested in your success, His power would mean nothing to you. So, you don't have to memorize all the names of God from the old covenant. What you need is a full revelation that Jesus, in the new covenant, is your Savior! What is Tiger Woods famous for? Golf! What is David Beckham famous for? Soccer! (No, he's famous for product endorsements!)

What is Jesus famous for?

Saving you!

That's not all, my brothers and sisters. The Bible goes on to say that "all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet Isaiah, saying: 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,' which is translated, 'God with us.'"³ Now, it is very interesting for us to note that Jesus' name is not just Jesus! His name is also Immanuel, meaning the Almighty God is with us.

Jesus Is Immanuel, Almighty God With Us

A brother in Christ shared that even as a believer years ago, he had a problem with alcohol, and every night he would be out drinking to the point that he could not even remember how he got home the next day. He tried everything he could to stop drinking, but failed over and over again.

One day, he went out with some friends for a game of squash, and after the game, he laid down on the ground to rest. As he was resting, he felt Jesus' presence come upon him, and in that very moment, the Lord broke his addiction to alcohol and completely removed his desire to drink!

Today, this brother whom the Lord delivered from alcoholism is a key leader in his church. Isn't it just like God to take the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, and the foolish things of the world to confound the wise?²

You know, all our struggling, willpower, self-discipline and self-effort cannot do what the presence of the Lord can do in an instant. And who is to say that as we are talking about Jesus now, His presence will not take away something that is destructive in your life? You see, you are transformed not by struggling. You are transformed by beholding Jesus and believing that He loves you and wants to save you.

Now, what does it mean to say "God with us"? We must understand it the same way the Hebrew people would have understood it. There is something beautiful here—this is the secret of Immanuel! The Jewish mind understands that when the Lord is with you, you become successful in every endeavor in your life. Don't just take my word for it. Look through the chronicles of Jewish history. The Bible records that whenever the Lord was with them in battle, the children of Israel were never defeated, and every military campaign ended in overwhelming success.

It was some much of a victory at the battle for Jericho, that the city was theirs with just a shout! (Joshua 6:20) Why? Because, The Lord was with them. Even in battles when they were outnumbered, they triumphed because the Lord was with them. It is no different in the modern context. When the Bible says that Jesus is with you, He is with you to help you, assist you, turn things around for you and make good things happen for you. He is not with you, as some wrongly believe, to condemn, judge or find fault!

I have seen this time and time again! When Almighty God is with you, good things will happen in you, around you and through you. I learned the truth of what it means to have the Lord with me early on in my teens. One of the first truths that the Holy Spirit taught me was Genesis 39:2— "The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man..." So, you know what? I began to claim that verse every day and I would say out loud, "Jesus is with me, so everything I do will succeed." I

² Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 6-7.

was practicing the presence of Jesus. It is one thing to give mental assent that Jesus is with you, but it is another thing to start being conscious of Jesus' presence. You can start practicing His presence by speaking it out.

Practice His Presence And See His Power

Do you know that 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. Feelings can be deceptive. Go by His promise that He is Immanuel!

Have you heard the story of a groom who approached his pastor almost immediately after his wedding ceremony? He went up to his pastor and said, "Pastor, could I talk to you for a second?" "Sure," the pastor replied. The groom said, "You know, I don't really feel married." The pastor grabbed him by the shirt collar and growled, "Listen to me boy, You ARE married whether you feel it or not, understand? Just take it by faith that you are married!"³

We must go by God's Word, not our feelings. Feelings can at times lead us astray.

You see, my dear brothers and sisters, you can't go by your feelings. You go by the truth and the truth is this: God promised, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5) So the best time to practice His presence is precisely when you feel like Jesus is 100,000 miles away. Remember that feelings aren't based on truth. God's Word is truth!

Let me share with you a testimony from a brother in Christ who writes:

"...soon after I graduated from high school, I took on a part-time job to teach in an elementary school where I was placed in charge of a class of 10-year-olds. I remember one day, when I was practicing His presence, I knelt down in my living

³ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 8-9.

room and prayed, “Lord, I just thank You that You are always with me.” As I was on my knees, the Lord told me to pray specifically for one of the girls in my class who had been absent from school that day.

“Now, it is very common for kids to miss class now and then for various reasons, and I had never been led by the Lord to pray specifically for any of them. This girl was the first! The Lord told me very clearly to pray for His protection to be over this girl and to cover her with His precious blood.

“The next day, there was a big commotion in the school and I found out that the girl had been kidnapped by a notorious serial killer that very afternoon that the Lord had told me to pray for her. The killer, Adrian Lim, had kidnapped several children to be offered up as sacrifices to the devil. He believed that Satan would give him power when he offered the blood of these children to him.

“Over the next couple of days, this girl from my class was all over our national media because she had been miraculously released. Sadly, she was the only girl released. All the other kidnapped girls had been brutally murdered.

“When she returned to class, I asked her how she came to be freed. She told me that her kidnapper was “praying” over her when suddenly he stopped and told her, “The gods do not want you.” She was quickly released that evening. Of course, you and I know why the “gods” didn’t want her—she was covered and protected by Jesus’ blood!”⁴

Listen to what I am saying here. In America and all around the world today, the devil is trying to destroy a new generation because he is afraid that the young people of the new millennium are going to take over the world for Jesus. That is why we have to cover our children with Jesus’ protection.

I am sharing all this with you because I want you to see the importance and power of practicing His presence. As a teacher during that time, the class our brother led was his responsibility, just like a pastor’s congregation or a Bible Teacher’s class

⁴ Prince, Unmerited Favor. P. 10-12.

is their responsibility today. Think with me: How in the world, with my finite knowledge and intelligence, could this brother have known that one of his students was in great danger? It is not possible! But because the Lord, who knows all things, was with me, He made me a successful teacher.

Similarly, whatever role or vocation you are in, whether you are a schoolteacher, business leader or homemaker, I want you to know that Jesus is with you and He wants to make you a success. My Beloved brothers and sisters, His unmerited favor is for you. The Lord Immanuel is with you.

Whatever role you are in, Jesus is with you and He wants to make you a success. You see, it is not us; it is Him. If Jesus is with us, He will give us success in all that we do and cause us to have good results in every area of our lives to the glory of God. If God can do it for Joseph, a young man sold into slavery, He can do it for you! Let this be your reality:

“The Lord is with _____, and I am a successful person.”

As you become conscious of how Jesus is with you, you’ll see Him leading you to success in all that you need to do!

Chapter Two: Becoming Safe For Success

As much as we are interested in the Jesus-kind of results in our lives, it is of equal importance that we desire the Jesus-kind of success. God does not want us to have success that will crush us. I am sure that you have heard many stories of people who receive a sudden windfall when they come into a large inheritance or win the first prize in a lottery. However, for some of these people, the sudden wealth did not give them a better life. Instead, in many instances, we know that it corrupted and destroyed their lives.

Often, these people were not able to handle their so-called success, and ended up leaving their wives and allowing their families to break apart right before their eyes. Perhaps they bought all sorts of things and lived in huge houses. Yet, they still felt a chronic sense of loneliness, emptiness and dissatisfaction. The sad reality is that many of those who chanced upon such sudden wealth squandered it all away, and some even became bankrupt. Such results are clearly not the Jesus-kind of results, nor are they the Jesus-kind of success.

Let me make it clear from the onset: God has no problem with you having money, but He does not want money to have you!

“But Dr. Charles, how can you say that God has no problem with us having money? Doesn’t the Bible say that money is the root of all evil?”

Please stop right there, that’s not in the Bible. We must always be scripturally accurate. What the Bible says is this: “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil ...” (1 Timothy 6:10) Can you see the difference? Having money does not make you evil. It is the obsession with and intense love of money that lead to all kinds of evil. Just because a person has no money in his pocket does not mean that he is holy. He may well be thinking, dreaming and lusting after money all day

long. You don't need to have a lot of money to have the love of money. If a person is always purchasing lottery tickets, going to the casinos and gambling in the stock market, this person clearly has a love for money. He is obsessed with getting more money.

He wants to bless you so that you can be a blessing!

When God called Abraham, He said to him, "...I will bless you...and you shall be a blessing." (Genesis 12:2) You and I, who are new covenant believers in Christ, are called the seed of Abraham, (Galatians 3:29) and like Abraham, we are called to be a blessing. Now, how can we be a blessing if we are not blessed in the first place? How can we be a blessing to others when we are always flat on our backs with sickness, living from hand to mouth, never having enough for our own family and always having to borrow from others? No way, my friend. God wants you healthy and strong, and He wants you to have more than enough financial resources so that you can be generous with your relatives, friends, community or anyone who needs help. How can you be in a position to help others if you need all the help you can get yourself? It's definitely not God's best for you if you barely have enough for yourself. He wants to bless you so that you can be a blessing!

The Gospel Of Jesus Christ Brings Supernatural Healing And Provision

"Oh, Dr. Charles, now I know that you are one of those health and wealth, prosperity gospel preachers!"

There is no such thing as a "prosperity gospel." There is only one gospel and that is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Through Jesus' finished work on the cross, you can depend on Him for His resurrection life to pulsate and flow in your physical body from the crown of your head to the soles of your feet. Sicknesses and diseases are not from God. On the cross, Jesus bore not just our sins, but also our sicknesses, diseases and infirmities, and "by His stripes we are healed"! (Isaiah 53:5)

That's not all, my dear brother or sister. On the cross, Jesus bore the curse of poverty! This is what the Word of God declares:

“For you know the grace [unmerited favor] of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.” (2 Corinthians 8:9)

Read 2 Corinthians 8 for yourself. The entire chapter is about money and being a blessing financially to those who are in need. So, do not let anyone tell you that the verse is referring to “spiritual” riches.

One of the things that I always want to remind my students is this:

Always read a verse in its context because when you take the “text” out of its “context,” it becomes a con!

Don't let anyone con you out of God's blessings in your life. Let me ask you again: How can you be a blessing to anyone when you are always sick and always borrowing from one person to repay another? My dear brother or sister, it is the devil who wants you sick and poor, but the God I know has paid a heavy price to redeem you from the curse of sickness and poverty!

Let us understand how God deals with us from the point of relationship. As a parent, how would you teach your child character and patience? With sicknesses and diseases? Of course not! There are institutions where we put such parents! Again, as a parent, how would you teach your child humility? By cursing your child with poverty for the rest of his life? No way! Now, isn't it amazing how everything becomes crystal clear when we start thinking from the point of view of a parent, and put our own children in the picture?

When you start to think along the lines of relationship, everything will converge and you will begin to see things from God's perspective. He is our Father who operates on the frequency of relationship, and through His unmerited favor in our lives, we learn character, patience and humility as we rest from our self-efforts and depend on Him. The more we know our Father, the more we become like Him.

This is how God causes us to grow from glory to glory in every area of our lives. It is simply by beholding Him! (2 Corinthians 3:18)⁵

You know that as parents, we always seek the best things for our children. How much more would our Father in heaven want the best things for us, His precious children? In the same way that you want your children to be healthy, God wants you to enjoy His divine health. And in the same way that you want your children to always have more than enough, God wants you to enjoy His supernatural provision. When He provides, get ready for a net-breaking, boat-sinking load. (Luke 5:6-7) Get ready for 12 baskets full of leftovers! (John 6:13) The Bible puts things in perspective most clearly in Matthew 7:11—If you then, as imperfect parents “know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him”!⁶

Now, if you were to take a walk with me to the intensive care unit of any hospital, you would see people there gasping to draw their next breath and groaning in anguish despite the painkillers being pumped into their ravaged bodies. Look at the inconsolable woman, who has just lost her husband, crying hysterically in the corridor. Then, look me in the eye and tell me that you really think that this is the work of our loving Father. Then, walk with me through the malaria-infested streets of any slum, and look at the children scavenging through mounds of rubbish and gratefully eating any scrap of discarded food that they can find.

Look at the young girls forced into prostitution and the scarred bodies of desperate parents who had no choice but to sell their organs to make ends meet. Then, look me in the eye again, and tell me that you believe poverty is from our Father.

Even the world has more common sense than some Christians! Look at what people like Bill and Melinda Gates, Warren Buffett and Bono are doing. They are using their fame, resources and time to fight against sickness and poverty. And here, we have believers who are completely blinded by legalistic beliefs, telling us

⁵ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 29-30.

⁶ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 30-31.

that sickness and poverty are from God. I hope that you are beginning to see how warped and embarrassing this is.

My brothers and sisters, get this right: 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 Christ, to die on the cross for us. He placed all of humanity's sin, as well as the curse of sickness and poverty on the body of Jesus. Right now, humanity only has to respond to Jesus' finished work, and their sins will be forgiven, their physical bodies will be healed and their poverty will indeed be history! God wants you to be blessed spirit, soul and body. He is not against you having money and material things. But let me make it clear: He is against money and things having you. I often tell my church this: Use money and love people. Don't love money and use people.

God wants you and your family completely blessed and having more than enough to be a blessing. But at the same time, He wants to be sure that success will not destroy you and cause your family to disintegrate. To be safe for success, keep your heart ablaze with passion for Jesus and His presence, rather than on empty materialistic things.⁷

Safe For Success—Keep Your Eyes On Jesus

The Word of God says, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” (Matthew 6:33) Now, what is the kingdom of God? The apostle Paul tells us in Romans 14:17 that the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

When you keep your eyes fixed on Jesus and pursue the kingdom of God, which is Jesus' righteousness, His peace and His joy, God's Word promises that “all these things” will be added to you. “These things” refer to what you will eat, drink and

⁷ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 32-33.

wear. Jesus tells us that you do not have to be consumed by these concerns. If your Father feeds even the birds of the air, even though they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, how much more will He take care of you, who are of much more value to Him than the birds! (Matthew 6:25-32)

My brothers and sisters, just keep your eyes on Jesus and His finished work on the cross. Not only will He add the things that you need in this life to you, He will also cause you to become safe for success. Now, turn with me to the Book of Jeremiah to see what the Lord says about having riches, wisdom and might.⁸

“Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises loving kindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the Lord. —Jeremiah 9:23–24, NASB

Let us be a people who will not depend on our own wisdom, might and riches (in summary, our own merits), but rather, let our boasting (dependence) be in understanding and knowing Jesus. Know that He is gracious and full of unmerited favor toward us. Know that He executes justice against all injustices. Know that He Himself is righteousness and He clothes’ us with His robes of righteousness. The more you focus on beholding Jesus in all His loveliness and the less you struggle to earn things by your own merits, the more you become safe for greater success in your life.⁹

Let us continue our study on the life of Joseph. There are still many precious gems hidden in his life that we have not touched on, and I want you to see what it means when a man is safe for success. In the previous chapter, we saw how the Lord’s manifested presence in his life made all that Joseph did to prosper. The results that Joseph produced were so spectacular that even Potiphar, an unbeliever with no spiritual discernment, could visibly see that the Lord was with Joseph. Potiphar was no fool. When he saw that whatever Joseph touched flourished in his hand,

⁸ Prince, Unmerited Favor. p. 33-34.

⁹ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 34.

Joseph “found favor in his sight” and Potiphar quickly promoted Joseph to become the overseer of his house, putting “all that he had” under Joseph’s authority. Then, the Bible records that the Lord blessed Potiphar’s house “for Joseph’s sake,” and the blessing of the Lord was on all that Potiphar had in the house and in the field. (Genesis 39:4-5) My brothers and sisters, the unmerited favor that you have with the Lord will overflow and lead to favor with the people around you. In your career, when Jesus causes everything that your hand touches to prosper, you will receive favor from your boss, and that will lead to accelerated increase and promotion. Believe that because you, child of God, are in the organization, your organization will thrive and be blessed. The Lord will bless the organization that you are in for your sake.¹⁰

The Difference Between God’s Unmerited Favor And Favoritism

We have seen that Joseph was a successful man because the Lord was with him, and because he depended on unmerited favor from God. It is also important for you to recognize that there is a significant difference between God’s unmerited favor and favoritism.

God’s unmerited favor is based entirely on Jesus’ merit, and we received it through His finished work at the cross. We did nothing to deserve His favor. It is completely unmerited. Favoritism, however, stinks of self-effort. Individuals who rely on favoritism for promotion have to resort to apple polishing, office politics, 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 you. It hurts Him to see His own precious children groveling like sycophants just to get ahead in life. If a door closes, so be it! Believe with full confidence that God has a better way for you. You do not have

¹⁰ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 35.

to depend on favoritism to keep opportunities open for yourself when you have God's unmerited favor on your side!

That was how Joseph conducted himself. He depended on the Lord for his success, and not on favoritism, which would have required him to compromise his beliefs. When Potiphar's wife kept trying to seduce Joseph to sleep with her, Joseph stood his ground on the firm foundation of unmerited favor. By the way, I believe that Joseph faced a real temptation. Don't forget that Potiphar was a high-ranking officer. He was the captain of the guard, and a man of position, influence and wealth. As a man of the world, he would not have married an ugly woman for her inner beauty and would certainly not have married an 80-year-old grandmother! He would definitely have chosen a young, beautiful woman to be his wife, and she was possibly one of the most beautiful women in the land.

So, there is no doubt that she was a real temptation to Joseph, and that is why Joseph had to run! This woman didn't just tempt Joseph once. The Bible tells us that "she spoke to Joseph day by day," enticing him to lie with her. (Genesis 39:10) But Joseph refused, saying, "There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he [Potiphar] kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9)

From his own words, it is clear that Joseph knew the source of his success, favor and blessings. He did not see giving in to Potiphar's wife as a great wickedness and sin against Potiphar alone, but against God too. He knew that every blessing that he had experienced was a result of the Lord's favor on him. He knew that it was not Potiphar who promoted him from a lowly slave to become the overseer of Potiphar's entire estate. It was the Lord!¹¹

¹¹ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 36-37.

Have A Living Relationship With Jesus And Walk In His Ways

Now, this is really beautiful. People sometimes ask me, “Pastor Prince, if you don’t teach the Ten Commandments to your church, what is going to govern them?” My friend, the Lord Himself will govern them! Look at the life of Joseph. He lived many years before the Ten Commandments were given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Yet, he could look at Potiphar’s beautiful wife, who was throwing herself at him, and say, “How...can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”

All this took place long before there was a commandment that said, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” (Exodus 20:14) The question is, who taught Joseph? Who taught him that adultery was a great wickedness against God? Think about it. He was a young, red-blooded man who was far away from home, and he knew that sleeping with Potiphar’s wife would have given him many other perks, if he wanted to depend on favoritism. He could have been bitter with God and with his brothers, who had betrayed him. He could have chosen to take full advantage of the situation that was presenting itself to him, since it appeared as if he had been abandoned by the only people that he cared about. Nobody was around and nobody would know. But guess what? Joseph had a relationship with God. He had a relationship with the King of kings. He knew that the Lord was with him every step of the way and that the Lord had not forsaken him.¹²

You see, we cannot have a relationship with the law, with two cold tablets of stone, but we can have a living relationship with Jesus, and He will put His laws upon our minds and write them on our hearts, (Hebrews 8:10) causing us to walk in His ways that lead to life. Joseph had no Ten Commandments governing him. All he had was a living relationship with the Lord. He knew that Jesus was His success, and that made him safe for success!

¹² Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 37-38.

Chapter Three: Success Beyond Your Circumstances

The presence of Jesus is all that you need. It is exciting to enjoy His presence daily in everything that you do. The Bible records the story of a group of friends who broke through the rooftop of a house, so that they could bypass the crowds that were blocking their way to Jesus, and bring their paralytic friend before Jesus to be healed. (Mark 2:1-12) I love that “whatever it takes” spirit to be in the presence of Jesus. But you know what? Today, we don’t have to climb mountains, swim vast oceans or even break through rooftops to be in His presence. Right where you are, Jesus, your Immanuel, is with you!

There is a powerful rhetorical question in the Bible and I encourage you to memorize it:

If God is for us, who can be against us? —Romans 8:31

It is unfortunate that there are still some believers today wondering, “Is God really for me?” Well, my friend, the Word of God does NOT say “maybe God is for us” or “hopefully, God is for us.” It simply says, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” Indeed, when God is for you, what opposition can succeed against you? When God Himself fights for you, defends you and vindicates you, what adversity or adversary can stand against you? There are none! Hallelujah!

“But Dr. Charles, how did God come to be on our side? Even though I am a Christian today, I still fail and fall short of God’s holy standards. I still lose my temper on the road now and then, and from time to time, I still get angry with my wife and kids. Why should God be on my side when I fail? Don’t you know that God’s holy?”

Good question. Let me tell you why. The answer is found at the cross. The blood that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, shed on the cross put God on your side. Today, God can be for you even when you fail because Jesus' blood has washed you whiter than snow!

Have you seen Cecil B. DeMille's movie, *The Ten Commandments*, or the animation, *The Prince of Egypt*? Do you remember what happened on the night of the Passover? The children of Israel put the blood of the lamb on their doorposts. What did the blood do? The blood put God on their side! None of the families who had applied blood on their doorposts had to fear the death of their firstborn children.

Take a moment and think about this. Were the firstborn children of Israel spared that night because of their perfect behavior 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, God does not bless you, as a new covenant believer, based on your perfect behavior and conduct. He is for you today because of the blood of the perfect Lamb—Jesus Christ. That is why as believers today, we don't have to fight for ourselves. I like to say it this way: "If God is for us, who can come successfully against us?" Always remember that God is on your side today because of Jesus' blood. His holiness and righteousness that men are afraid of are now on your side because of Jesus' blood. His unmerited favor is on your side and all of heaven's resources are yours because of Jesus' blood! Now, who can come against you? No sickness, no disease, no creditor, no evil accusation, no gossip—no weapon formed against you, can come successfully against you!¹³ (Isaiah 54:17)

You Can't Earn God's Favor Because It Is A Free Gift

"Well, Dr. Charles, Jesus is with some people because they do a lot of good. I don't do much good for God or for others, so how can Jesus be with me?"

¹³ Prince. *Unmerited Favor*, p. 40-41.

Some people believe that doing a lot for charity or performing acts of kindness will put God on their side. Somehow, they have this idea that if they have donated significant amounts of money to the poor or volunteered their time to serve in church, all these doings will put them in favor with God and cause Him to be on their side. My dear brothers and sisters, let us speak openly about this. God is not with you because of what you do or don't do, or because of what you have done or not done. That kind of thinking still places the focus on you. God's love for you is unconditional. He is about relationship, not rules.¹⁴

On the other side, legalism is all about rules you need to keep and how often you should do something. It is all about you, you, you doing or not doing something in order to earn God's favor and get Him on your side. Christianity becomes a life of legalism for Christians who believe that if they spend a lot of time reading the Bible, praying, fasting or volunteering their time in church, they will gain increased favor with God. They think that all their works will cause God to be on their side and answer their prayers.¹⁵

But do you really think that you can twist God's arm with your good works? Let me ask you: Does God answer your prayers because of your merit or Jesus' merit? Is He on your side because of your merit or Jesus' merit? Come on, it's important to get these foundational truths right and not slide in and out of trying to deserve God's favor when He wants us to receive everything through His unmerited favor. Am I saying that you shouldn't read the Bible, pray, fast or serve the Lord in church? No, a thousand times no! All that I am saying is that when you do these things, do them from a heart that wants to, and not from a heart that has to because of legalistic obligations.

Think about this with me for a moment. Would you like your spouse to spend time with you because he or she wants to, or because he or she has to? Do you think that our loving God is any different? Jesus is not interested in works driven by a sense of legalism. He is interested in you wanting to spend quality time with Him in His Word, so that He can talk to you, encourage you and impart the necessary wisdom

¹⁴ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 41.

¹⁵ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p.41-42.

to you for the day. It is not about you fulfilling a daily Bible reading quota, accumulating sufficient prayer minutes or fasting long enough in order to qualify for Jesus' blessings. Absolutely not.

If you are going to do all that, it should be because you have an abiding revelation that Jesus' presence is with you, an understanding that His unmerited favor is toward you and a certainty that He is on your side. And out of that overflowing abundance of appreciation for His love that you are undeserving of, you desire to hear His voice and seek His face. You begin to trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. You begin to acknowledge Him in all your ways and allow Him to direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6) Isn't it amazing how man, blinded by his self-efforts, can turn something so beautiful, like spending quality time with Jesus, into a work?¹⁶

My dear brother or sister, God is with you today because of His precious Son, Jesus. For God so loved the world, He gave His Only Son, and His name is Immanuel. God gave us Jesus. The presence of Jesus in your life is a free gift from God. There is no amount of good that you can do to earn the presence of Jesus. There is no number of good works that you can perform to merit His favor. His presence in your life is a free gift. Now, because you did nothing to deserve His presence in your life, there is nothing you can do that will cause His presence to leave you. Once you have received Jesus into your heart, He will never leave you nor forsake you!¹⁷ (Hebrews 13:5)

“But Dr. Charles, when I fail, doesn't Jesus leave me?”

No, absolutely not! Jesus is right by your side to encourage you and restore you to wholeness. You may say, “But I don't deserve it!” That's right. That's what makes it His unmerited favor in your life. There is a beautiful psalm that says,

¹⁶ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 42-43.

¹⁷ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 43.

“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.” (Psalm 37:23-24)

When you fail, Jesus is there to uphold you. Unlike some of your so-called “friends,” He does not just take off. You can count on Him. He is a faithful, dependable and trustworthy friend. Even when you have failed Him, He is right there with you, ready to pick you up and restore you to wholeness. Amen! The Bible talks about a friend who “sticks closer than a brother.” (Proverbs 18:24) That’s Our Jesus!

The Divine Exchange

There was a time under the law in the Old Testament where God would be with you only when you were in complete obedience. But when you failed, He would leave you. Today, however, you and I are under a completely different covenant and God will never leave us. Why? Because of what Jesus did on the cross. At the cross, He became our burnt offering. He bore our sins and carried our punishment. God’s judgment against our sins fell upon Jesus, who was forsaken at the cross by His Father so that today, we can have God’s constant, unceasing presence in our lives.

Jesus cried out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” so that you and I will know exactly what happened on the cross. (Matthew 27:46) That is where the divine exchange took place. At the cross, Jesus took our sins and gave up the presence of God, while we took Jesus’ righteousness and received the presence of God that Jesus had. God’s presence is now ours for eternity. What a divine exchange!

Take a look with me at what the Bible says about our inheritance in Christ: “...For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So that we may boldly say: ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’” (Hebrews 13:5-6) What confidence we can have today! Do you know what “never”

here means? It means that when you are up, He is with you. When you are down, He is with you. When you are glad, He is with you. When you are sad, He is with you. When you are doing right, He is with you. Even when you have failed, He is still with you! That is what it means when Jesus said that He would never leave you nor forsake you!

In case you are still not convinced, let me show you what it says in the original Greek text. When God said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you,” a “double negative”¹⁸ is used to convey the strongest sense of “never” possible in the Greek language. The Greek words *ou me* are used, which in essence means, “never never” or “never ever.” And this double negative appears twice in this one statement from the Lord. *Ou me* is used for both “never” and “nor.” In other words, God is saying, “I will never never leave you and I will never never forsake you!” The Amplified Bible brings out the strength of what God really meant:

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 nor let [you] down (relax My hold on you)! [Assuredly not!] —Hebrews 13:5, AMP

Wow, that is what Jesus has done for us! He has given us the constant presence of God! My friend, you need to settle it in your heart once and for all—God will never leave you! God will never forsake you! And if you hear anyone telling you that you can forfeit the presence of God, stop listening. Don’t let that person rob you of the certainty of God’s presence in your life. When God says “never ever,” He means “never ever,” and our God cannot lie!¹⁹

¹⁸ NT:3364, Biblesoft’s New Exhaustive Strong’s Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright © 1994, 2003, 2006 Biblesoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc.

¹⁹ Prince, *Unmerited Favor*, p. 45-46.

Don't Evaluate God's Presence And Unmerited Favor Based On Your Circumstances

Now that you know that God's presence in your in your life is a guaranteed constant, I want you to recognize that you cannot evaluate God's presence and His unmerited favor in your life based on your circumstances. To help you understand what this means, let's continue our study on the life of Joseph and pick up the story from where we left off in the previous chapter.

Joseph has just refused the advances made by Potiphar's wife, and as the common saying goes, "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned"! So, she maliciously accused Joseph of attempting to rape her, brandishing as "evidence" the garments that Joseph had left in her hands when he fled from her. When Potiphar heard his wife telling her version of the story, his anger was aroused and he seized Joseph, stripped him from the place of authority he had given him and threw him into prison.

Just put yourself in Joseph's shoes. What is happening here? It sounds all too familiar, doesn't it? With the painful memory of his brothers casting him into the pit still fresh in his mind, here he is once again, cast into a dungeon even though he had not done anything wrong. Any average person would be bitter and angry with God! Most people would ask, "Where is God? Why had God brought him this far, only to abandon and forsake him? How could this happen? Where is the justice against this false accusation?"²⁰

But Joseph was literally no "average Joe"! He knew that the Lord would never leave him nor forsake him. Joseph considered not his circumstances, but kept his focus on the presence of the Lord. Regardless of whether he was a common slave, an overseer in Potiphar's house or now a prisoner facing the prospect of life imprisonment for a crime he did not even commit, Joseph did not evaluate God's unmerited favor in his life based on his circumstances. Instead of getting bitter, he kept his hope in the Lord. Instead of throwing in the towel and giving up on God

²⁰ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 46-47.

and on life, he kept his confidence, knowing that all his success was wrapped up in the presence of the Lord.

And wow, did the Lord deliver him! I want you to read this for yourself to see what the Lord did for Joseph:

But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing. The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority, because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper. —Genesis 39:21–23

When You Have God's Unmerited Favor, You Cannot Help But Prosper

When the unmerited favor of God is upon you wherever you are, just as it was upon Joseph:²¹

- (1) you cannot help but find favor,
- (2) everything that you do cannot help but prosper, and
- (3) you cannot help but experience increase and promotion beyond your wildest imagination.

Can you see that this was the consistent pattern in Joseph's life? It didn't matter if he was a slave or prisoner. The same applies to you. When the unmerited favor of God is upon you, you are 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 favor of God will always cause you to POP right up to the top!

Don't be discouraged by your current circumstances. I know things may sometimes appear bleak, dismal and perhaps, even devastating, but it's not over,

²¹ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 48.

my dear brother or sister. I wrote this course to tell you that it's not over! I don't believe for one moment that among the many courses that are available right now, you are reading this particular one by chance or coincidence. This is a divine appointment and I believe that God is saying this to you: "Don't give up. It's not over!"

There are many times where the lowest points in your life are actually the launching pads to God's greatest promotion in your life. It was so for Joseph! Let's rewind the tape and observe the fingerprints of the Lord through the ups and downs of Joseph's life. If Joseph had not been betrayed by his brothers, he would not have been sold as a slave. If he had not been sold as a slave, he would not have been in Potiphar's house. If he was not in Potiphar's house, he would not have been thrown into an Egyptian prison meant specifically for the king's prisoners. If he was not in that specific prison, he would not have interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh's officers. If he had not interpreted their dreams, he would not have been summoned to interpret Pharaoh's dream two years later. If he had not interpreted Pharaoh's dream, Pharaoh would not have promoted Joseph to become his prime minister over the entire Egyptian empire!²²

This is what Pharaoh said to Joseph: "Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you. You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you...See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." (Genesis 41:39-41) When we look back, it is clear that the Lord had turned Joseph's darkest hour into his finest hour!

You have seen how God's presence with Joseph and His unmerited favor caused Joseph to be promoted from the pit to the palace, from the dunghill to Capitol Hill, from the outhouse to the White House. Stop looking at your circumstances and stop allowing them to discourage you. The same Lord who was with Joseph is with you right now. You cannot fail! You can expect to see success beyond your present circumstances!²³

²² Prince, *Unmerited Favor*, p.49.

²³ Prince. *Unmerited Favor*, p. 49-50.

Chapter Four: God's Peace For Your Success

Peace is not the absence of trouble in your life. It is not the absence of turmoil, challenges or things that are not harmonious in your physical environment. It is possible to be in the midst of the biggest crisis in your life and still experience peace. That's the true kind of peace that you can experience with Jesus—peace that surpasses understanding. Naturally speaking, it does not make sense for you to feel completely at rest and at peace when you are in dire straits, but supernaturally, you can be filled with peace!

The world typically defines peace, harmony and tranquility based on what is happening in the sensory realm. The world's notion of peace would look something like this: A man lying in a hammock on a white sandy beach in Hawaii with luau music playing softly in the cabana, coconut trees swaying in perfect unison and warm, blue waves rolling languidly along the shoreline. The world calls that peace—until reality kicks in, and the transient peace that was experienced just moments ago dissipates into thin air!²⁴

You see, my dear brother or sister, you cannot use your external surroundings to permanently influence the turmoil that you are feeling inside. Only Jesus can touch what you are feeling inside and turn that turmoil into His peace. With the Lord by your side, and from that abiding peace within, you can influence your external surroundings. It's not the other way around. With Jesus, transformation is always from inside out and not outside in.

²⁴ Prince, *Unmerited Favor*, p. 79-80.

Peace In The Midst Of A Storm

I read about an art competition where the theme given was “peace.” The artist who most effectively depicted peace in his artwork would win the competition. The artists gathered their paints, canvases and brushes and started working on creating their masterpieces. When the time came to judge the artworks, the judges were impressed by the various scenes of tranquility illustrated by the artists. There was a majestic piece capturing the brilliance of the sun setting over lush greenery, one that depicted a serene landscape of moonlit hills and another evocative piece that showed a lone man walking leisurely through rustic paddy fields.

Then, the judges came upon a peculiar piece that looked almost horrifying and perhaps even ugly to some. It was the very antithesis of every other piece that the judges had seen. It was a wild cacophony of violent colors and the aggression with which the artist had lashed his brush against the canvas was obvious. It depicted a raging storm where the ocean waves were swollen to menacing heights and slamming against the craggy edges of a cliff with thunderous force. Lightning zigzagged across the blackened sky and the branches of the single tree that was perched atop the cliff were all swept to the side by the force of the gale. Now, how could this picture be the epitome of peace?

Yet, the judges unanimously awarded first prize to the artist who painted the turbulent storm. While the results initially appeared to be appalling, the judges’ decision immediately became clear once you gave the winning canvas a closer look. Hidden in a crevice in the cliff is a family of eagle’s snug in their nest. The mother eagle faces the blustering winds, but her young chicks are oblivious to the storm and have dozed off under the shelter of her wings.²⁵

Now, that’s the kind of peace that Jesus gives to you and me! He gives us peace, security, covering and protection even in the midst of a storm. The psalmist describes this beautifully:

²⁵ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 81.

“He who dwells in the secret place of the *Most High* shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty...He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge.” ----Psalm 91:1-4

There is no safer place than under the protective shelter of your Savior’s wings. It does not matter what circumstances may be raging around you. You can cry to the Lord for His unmerited favor, as David did in Psalm 57:1.

The New American Standard says:

“Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me, for my soul takes refuge in You; and in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge until destruction passes by.”

The New King James Version says:

“Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me! For my soul trusts in You; and in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge, until these calamities have passed by.”

What blessed assurance we can have today, knowing that even if destruction rages around us, we can take refuge in the Lord.

Start Your Day With Jesus

Do you know that your God has promised that no weapon formed against you shall prosper? (Isaiah 54:17) Now, He did not promise that weapons would not be formed against you. He promised that even if weapons were formed against you, they will not hurt or defeat you.

There are all kinds of weapons formed against humanity, especially in these last days. Just think of the many kinds of deadly viruses, sicknesses and diseases in the world. When you turn on the television and watch the news, all you seem to hear

about are wars, unrest, disasters, financial collapses, violence, unemployment, famines, a global meltdown, the subprime crisis, mounting credit card debts, crashing stock markets and large organizations filing for bankruptcy. It is amazing how many people wake up in the morning, and the first thing that they do is grab the newspapers and read bad news before heading to work. Then, just before they go to bed, they watch the news!

Before we go further, I want to stop and make something clear. I want you to understand that I am not against reading the newspapers, watching the news, or watching television for that matter. But I want to encourage you to start your day with Jesus instead, practicing His presence, acknowledging Him, committing your plans to Him and trusting Him for His unmerited favor, wisdom and strength for the day. Remember to be like Joseph in the Bible. The Lord was with Joseph and he was a successful man! Your success does not come as a result of you being updated about the latest virus or you being cued in to the latest disaster. No, your success will come as a result of your being tuned in to the presence of Jesus in your life!²⁶

There are many people in Grace churches who start the day each morning by partaking of Holy Communion, not as a ritual, but as a time to remember Jesus and the power of His cross. They look to Jesus for His strength, to receive His divine life for their physical bodies as they partake of the bread. They renew their consciousness of their free gift of righteousness purchased by the blood of Jesus on the cross as they partake of the cup. What a way to start the day!

I have also come to realize that the last thought before you go to sleep is very important. I have tried this before and you can try it too—go to bed thinking about Jesus, giving thanks to Him for the day. You can also meditate on one of His promises, such as the one found in Isaiah 54:17. Just say, “Thank You, Father. Your Word declares that no weapon formed against me shall prosper!” Most times, I wake up feeling rejuvenated, energized and refreshed even though I did not sleep for many hours.

²⁶ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 82-83.

Conversely, if I go to bed with what I have just heard on the news swirling in my mind, I could sleep many more hours than usual, but still wake up feeling fatigued. Sometimes I even get a headache. Have you been there before? Well, you don't have to experience that again. Sandwich your day with the presence of Jesus. Start the day with Him, enjoy Him during the day and end the day with Him on your mind!²⁷

Personally, the way I like to end my day is to watch a Joseph Prince sermon on DVD or listen to one on CD. Then I have Christian worship music play as I sleep. I often fall asleep just talking to the Lord Jesus while beautiful praises play on my radio or CD player!!!

You know, Psalm 127:2 aptly describes what we are talking about. It says:

“It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; for so He gives His beloved sleep.”

The bread of the world is the bread of sorrows, but Jesus is our bread of life. (John 6:35) When you feed on Him, you will be nourished physically, emotionally and spiritually, whereas the bread of the world only depletes you physically and drains you emotionally by adding stress, anxiety and worry to your life.²⁸

Isn't it beautiful that quality sleep is a gift from God? If you are struggling to sleep at night, look to Jesus. Develop a knowing in your heart that you are His beloved and rest on the promise that “He gives His beloved sleep.” Are you His beloved? Of course, you are! So, you qualify to enjoy the blessedness of sleep. Insomnia is not from God. Sleep is!

Guard What Comes Through Your Eye- And Ear-Gates

²⁷ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 83-84.

²⁸ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 84.

I have watched programs on television where the host of that program was interviewing several so-called experts about the economy in America. One “expert” was very positive and gave his reasons for being upbeat. Then, another “expert” interjected and gave his reasons for a bleak economic outlook. I watched this program for nearly an hour and none of these “experts” agreed on anything in the end. The thing about such discussions, whether it is on television, in the newspaper or on the Internet, is that it’s supposed to present two sides—one good and the other bad. No real resolution is reached at the end. Sometime after watching that program, I realized that I had been unknowingly feeding on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That’s all I got from watching such programs—more knowledge of what was good and what was evil, but this knowledge did nothing for me.

Now on the other side of the coin, when we feed on the person of Jesus, who is the tree of life, we find that His wisdom, understanding, peace, joy and unmerited favor will flow in our lives! Again, I am not saying that you should not watch the news. I am just saying that it is important for you to watch your viewing diet. It is far more powerful to be full of Jesus than to be full of worldly knowledge.²⁹

I always encourage those who sit under my teaching to be mindful of their eye- and ear-gates. Essentially, this means that we need to be conscious of what we watch and hear on a regular basis. The Book of Proverbs, which is chock-full of God’s wisdom, tells us:

“My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart; for they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh.” ---Proverbs 4:20-22 NKJV

God tells us to guard what we hear, what we see and what is in our hearts. He wants us to have our ears full of the gracious words of Jesus, our eyes full of the presence of Jesus and our hearts meditating on what we have heard and seen in Jesus. That’s what “give attention to my words” means today in the new covenant, for Jesus is God’s Word made flesh. John 1:14 says, “And the Word became flesh

²⁹ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 84-85.

and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace [unmerited favor] and truth.”³⁰

It is all about beholding Jesus, and as we behold Him, we are transformed more and more into His likeness, full of unmerited favor and truth! Don't miss this powerful promise my friend. The result of tuning our ear- and eye-gates to Jesus is that He will be life and health to us. The Bible shows us that there is a direct correlation between hearing and seeing Jesus, and the health of our physical bodies. The more we hear and see Jesus, the healthier and stronger we become! Our mortal bodies become infused with His resurrection life and power!³¹

If we are constantly feeding on the news media, it is no wonder that we feel weak and tired. There is just no nourishment for us there. Please hear what I am saying. It is all right to keep yourself abreast of current world events and be in the know about what is happening in the Middle East, trends in the economy and developments in the political arena. Such information may even be necessary for the industry that you are in. I am not asking you to become an ignoramus or to live in a cave. I am just saying that you should not overdose yourself on world news and developments and let them consume you.

Receive Jesus' Shalom For Every Stress In Life

The best way to know if you are wrapped up in the things of this world is to be objective and ask yourself this: “Is my heart troubled?” I believe that the number one killer in the modern world is stress. Many medical doctors have stated that if a patient has high blood pressure, they can advise the patient to cut down on sodium. They can also advise their patients to cut down on other excesses such as sugar or cholesterol. But as doctors, there is one thing that they cannot control in their patients, and that is their patients' stress levels.

³⁰ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 85-86.

³¹ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 86.

It is my personal belief that the physical root cause of many medical conditions today is stress. Stress can produce all kinds of imbalances in your body. It can cause you to age prematurely, give you rashes, cause gastric pains and even lead to abnormal growths in your body. To put it succinctly, stress kills! Doctors tell us that certain physical symptoms are “psychosomatic” in nature. That’s because these symptoms are brought about by psychological problems such as stress. Stress is not from God. Peace is from Him!

I hope that you are beginning to understand why Jesus said:

“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.” ----John 14:27 NKJV

Jesus would not have used the word “peace.” The Greek New Testament renders “peace” as eirene, but since Jesus spoke Aramaic/Hebrew, He would have used the word “shalom” — “Shalom I leave with you, My shalom I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.”

In the Hebrew language, “shalom” is a very rich and loaded word. There is no English word that can accurately encapsulate the fullness, richness and power contained in the word “shalom.”

Therefore, English Bible translators were only able to translate it as “peace.” But while the word “shalom” includes peace, it means so much more. Let’s look at the Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon to get a better idea of what Jesus meant when He said “Shalom I leave with you.”

The Hebrew Lexicon describes “shalom” as completeness, safety, soundness (in body), welfare, health, prosperity, peace, quiet, tranquility, contentment, peace used of human relationships, peace with God especially in covenant relationship and peace from war.⁶³² Wow, that is an incredibly powerful word! This is the

³² OT:7965, The Online Bible Thayer’s Greek Lexicon and Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon,

shalom that Jesus has bequeathed you: His completeness, His safety, His soundness, His welfare, His health, His prosperity, His peace, His quietness, His tranquility, His contentment, His peace in human relationships, His peace with God through the covenant made at the cross and His peace from war. All these, my dear brothers and sisters, are part of your inheritance in Christ today! I don't know about you, but in my heart, I am shouting praises to the Lord as I let this sink in! Can you picture the full implications of what it means to experience Jesus' shalom in your life?³³

Can you picture your life being free from regrets, anxieties and worries? How healthy, vibrant, energetic and strong you will be!

The Peace Jesus Gives Sets You Up For Success In Life

Jesus gives you His shalom to set you up for success in this life. You cannot be a success in your marriage, family and career when you are crippled and paralyzed with fear. Today, as you are reading this, I believe with all my heart that Jesus has already begun a work in your heart to liberate you from all your fears, whatever they may be. They may be the fear of failure, the fear of success, the fear of people's opinions of you or even the fear that God is not with you.

All the fears that you are experiencing in your life today began with an untruth, 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. That's why 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)

This scripture tells us that when you begin to have a revelation that God loves you perfectly (not because of what you have accomplished, but because of what Jesus

³³ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 88.

has accomplished for you), that revelation of the unmerited favor of Jesus will cast out every fear, every lie, every anxiety, every doubt and every worry that God is against you. The more you have a revelation of Jesus and how He has made you perfect, the more you will free yourself to receive His complete shalom and succeed in life!

My dear brothers and sisters, know 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. Today, you stand upon the righteousness of Jesus and not your own. Today, because of Jesus, God says this to you:

“I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke [condemn] you. For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall My covenant of peace be removed.” ---Isaiah 54:9-10 NKJV

God is on your side. The shalom of Jesus is on your side to make you a success in life. All of heaven's resources are on your side. Even if you are caught in the midst of a storm right now, just think of the picture of the eagle chicks nestled under the wings of their provider, sleeping soundly in spite of the storm. And may the shalom of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your heart and mind through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7) Go in this peace, my dear brother or sister, and rest upon His shalom!

Chapter Five: Covenanted To Succeed

This chapter could possibly be one of the most pivotal and crucial chapters in this course. I believe that if you take time to understand what the Lord has for you today, He will lay a strong foundation in your life that will set you up for every success. My desire for you is that there will be no more compromises when it comes to understanding the gospel of God's unmerited favor in your life. God's grace and unmerited favor IS the new covenant that you can enjoy today. Compromise and confusion occur when believers start fighting to put themselves back under the old covenant of Moses.

Let me illustrate in essence what some believers are doing when they insist on remaining under the covenant of law. Imagine this: Your company has promoted you, giving you a substantial increment of several thousand dollars every month, plus a new car and a beautiful new home as additional benefits. To document this promotion, the Human Resources department prepares a new employment contract for you, stating all the new terms that your employers have agreed upon. Now, suppose you insist on being paid your old salary, driving your old car and living in your old apartment. Instead of rejoicing at the new employment terms being offered to you, you fight your bosses and demand that you be remunerated based entirely on your old employment agreement!

Does this sound ridiculous?

Absolutely!

However, that is exactly what some believers are doing today. They have determined in their hearts that they will remain under the old covenant of law and depend on their own works to earn God's blessings, approval and favor. They have negated the cross and forgotten that God has enacted a new covenant of His unmerited favor through Jesus Christ's perfect sacrifice. Now, let me give you

some scriptures that deal specifically with comparing and contrasting the new covenant and the old covenant, so you know that I am not making this up.³⁴

God Found Fault With The Old Covenant Of Law

You are under the new covenant of unmerited favor through Jesus' finished work. The old covenant based on your works is now redundant. Look at what 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. —Hebrews 8:13, NIV

Read this verse again in your own Bible carefully. It is not Dr. Charles who said that the old covenant is redundant. I am just saying the same thing as what I read in my Bible. God's Word tells us in no uncertain terms that the covenant of Moses is antiquated and obsolete. It is no longer relevant for the new covenant believer who is in Christ today! So, it is not me who found fault with the old covenant of the law. God Himself found fault with the old covenant of law.

Let's look at another verse:

For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. —Hebrews 8:7 TLB

The Living Bible captures the apostle Paul's exasperation with the old covenant of law: "The old agreement didn't even work. If it had, there would have been no need for another to replace it. But God himself found fault with the old one..."
---Hebrews 8:7-8 TLB

³⁴ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p 91-92.

Think about this objectively for a moment. Just for a second, put aside all the traditional teachings that you have heard or read. Let's reason together, not based on what man says, but based completely on what God has said in His Word. His Word is our only unshakable premise. Based on this portion of the Scripture that we have just read together, if there was nothing wrong with the old covenant of law, why would God give up His one and only precious Son to be brutally crucified on the cross, so that He could cut a new covenant with us? Why would He be willing to pay such a heavy price, allowing Jesus to be publicly humiliated, and to suffer inhumane violence, if there wasn't something fundamentally wrong with the old covenant of law?

The cross demonstrated that God found fault with the old covenant and was determined to make it obsolete. He was determined to rescue us from our sins by cutting a new covenant with His Son Jesus. That's the amazing unconditional love that God has for you and me. He knew that no man could be justified and made righteous by the law. Only the blood of His Son would be able to justify us and make us righteous in Christ.³⁵

In all of Israel's 1,500 years under the covenant of law, not a single person was made righteous by the law. Even the best of them, such as David, failed. The Bible describes him as a man after God's own heart.² But even he failed—he committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband Uriah killed. What hope then do you and I have under the law?

Thank God that under the new covenant of His unmerited favor, even the worst of us can call upon the name of Jesus and receive Him as our personal Lord and Savior. In an instant, we can be made righteous by faith in Jesus' mighty name! Under the law, even the best failed. Under grace, even the worst can be saved!

³⁵ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 93-94.

Know Your Covenant Rights In Christ

I cannot emphasize enough how vitally important it is for a believer today to know that he is under the new covenant of God's unmerited favor and no longer under the law. Many good, well-meaning and sincere believers today are defeated by their lack of knowledge of the new covenant and all the benefits that Jesus has purchased for them at the cross.

“But Dr. Charles, we should not be looking at benefits when we believe in Jesus.”

I am glad that you brought up this up. Let's look at what the psalmist thinks about this:

“Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies, who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.”

----Psalm 13:1-5 NKJV

My beloved brothers and sisters, this is the heart of God. He wants you to remember all the benefits that Jesus has purchased for you with His blood! It is His heart to see you enjoying every single benefit, every single blessing and every single favor from Him in the new covenant of His grace. Forgiveness of sin is yours. Health is yours. Divine protection is yours. Favor is yours. Good things and the renewal of youth are yours! These are all precious gifts from the Lord to you, and it brings Him unspeakable joy when He sees you enjoying these gifts and succeeding in life. But it is the lack of knowledge of what Jesus has accomplished at the cross that has robbed many believers of enjoying these good gifts and benefits.³⁶

³⁶ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 95.

This reminds me of a story I read of a man who visited an impoverished old lady who was dying. As he sat next to her bed in the cramped confines of her dilapidated home, a single frame hanging on her spartan wall caught his attention.

Instead of a picture, the frame held a yellowed piece of paper with some writing on it. He asked the lady about that piece of paper 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 or 50 years now.” The man took a closer look at the framed contents, hesitated for 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, that lady had lived in abject poverty, working day and night to eke out a meager existence for herself. During all this time, she was actually the owner of a sprawling estate and enviable riches. However, her own ignorance had utterly robbed her of a life of wealth and luxury that she could have enjoyed. It is a sad story, but what is even sadder is that this tragedy is played out every day in the lives of believers who do not realize the inheritance that Jesus bequeathed them when He gave up His life at the cross.³⁷

What we need today are not more laws to govern believers. What we need is a greater revelation and appreciation of Jesus and everything that He has done for us! In Hosea 4:6, God lamented, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...” Let’s not be numbered among these people. Instead, let us be a people who are full of the knowledge of Jesus, His person, His love and His finished work. Don’t allow your ignorance to rob you anymore. Find out all about your covenant rights in Christ today!

³⁷ Prince, *Unmerited Favor*, p. 96-97.

Rightly Dividing The Old And New Covenants

To fully appreciate the new covenant of grace, we must first begin to understand what a “covenant” is. Down through the history of humanity, God has related to man through His covenants. A covenant is not merely a contract or legal agreement. It is much more than that. Also, in every covenant, blood is involved. That is why a marriage is not a contract. It is a covenant. In the act of consummating a marriage, there is supposed to be a shedding of blood. That shows you how serious a covenant is in God’s eyes. It is blood-based and inaugurated by blood.³⁸

I am going to show you a very simple way to understand the entire Bible. Look at the portion in your Bible that’s marked “Old Testament”; that deals essentially with the old covenant. When you look at the portion in your Bible that is marked “New Testament,” that is essentially the new covenant. However, the new covenant does not actually begin with the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John as these books deal predominantly with the life of Jesus before the cross. In fact, the new covenant begins after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Hence, the cross is our clearest marking point of where the new covenant begins.

“Dr. Charles, how is this relevant to me?”

If you will just hold on for a moment, I will explain to you why understanding the division between the old and new covenants is of critical importance for every believer. It is critical because a whole lot of misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the Bible that exists in the church today is a result of people reading, studying, interpreting and teaching the Bible without a clear understanding of how to rightly divide the old and new covenants! They merrily quote Old Testament passages without appropriating the cross of Jesus in their interpretations. They make it seem as though the cross made no difference!

³⁸ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 97.

So, before you quote an Old Testament verse to show how God is angry with believers for their sins, don't forget that it is in the context of the Old Testament, where Christ had not yet died on the cross. Am I saying that you should not read the Old Testament? No, not at all. You should read it, but with Jesus as the key to unlocking all the precious gems hidden in God's Word. While Jesus is in the Old Testament concealed, He is in the New Testament revealed. The stronger your foundation in the new covenant, the more you will be able to see Jesus unveiled in the Old Testament.³⁹

If you are familiar with my ministry, you would know that I am a new covenant grace preacher who loves to teach from the Old Testament and unveil the hidden secrets of Jesus! All Scripture is God-inspired and beneficial—no question about that. But all Scripture also needs to be studied and read in the light of the cross today. Consider this brilliant piece of wisdom that the apostle Paul wrote to his young apprentice, Timothy:

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” ----2 Timothy 2:15 NKJV

I believe with all of my heart that this advice from God's Word holds true today for all believers reading the Word and especially would-be Bible teachers!

You must learn to rightly divide the covenants! God's personal promise to you when you do that is that you will not be ashamed. Nobody would be able to pull the wool over your eyes by quoting chapters and verses from the Old Testament out of context to convince you that God is out to punish you for your sins, when you know with certainty that Jesus died once and for all for the full payment of all your sins. (Hebrews 10:12-14) No one can hoodwink you into believing that sicknesses and diseases are sent by God to teach you character and humility, when you know beyond the shadow of a doubt that Jesus came to give you abundant life, and took upon His own body all your sicknesses, pains and infirmities at the cross.⁴⁰ (Matthew 8:16-17)

³⁹ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 98.

⁴⁰ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 99.

Don't let anyone tell you that if you don't keep all the requirements of the law, God will not make you a success, because what the law could not do, God did by sending His Son, Jesus. (Romans 8:3) Today, all the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled in your life through Jesus!⁴¹

Do you see how powerful this is? Don't let anyone fool you with obscure passages from the Bible when Jesus has given you so many clear, explicit portions of Scripture that declare His favor and blessings over your life in the new covenant! Just because someone calls himself a teacher, prophet or an apostle doesn't mean that he has the authority to teach God's Word. Stop disqualifying yourself with the lack of knowledge of Jesus and His new covenant. Don't let anyone tell you that you need the law to make you righteous when you know that you are righteous today because of Jesus Christ!

The Place Of The Law On This Side Of The Cross

So, who is the law for? In 1 Timothy 1:8–10, Paul says:

“But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers...” ---1 Timothy 1:8-10 NKJV

My dear brother or sister, are you getting this? The law is not for you the believer, who has been made righteous in Christ! The law is not applicable to someone who is under the new covenant of grace. The law is for unrighteous people—unbelievers who have not received Jesus as their Savior. Its purpose is to bring them to the end of themselves and to help them realize that they need the Lord.

⁴¹ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 99-100.

Paul makes the purpose for the law very clear in the Book of Galatians when he says:

“Therefore, the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.”

---Galatians 3:24-25

That’s the role of the law—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 justifies and makes us righteous through His finished work! I am for the law, but only for the reason God gave the law. He gave the law to point us to Jesus. The law was never designed for man to keep and no man has, or will ever be able to keep it.⁴²

You see, my dear brother or sister, the law demands from man, but grace (unmerited favor) imparts to man. The law condemns the sinner, but grace (unmerited favor) makes the sinner righteous. The law brings death, but grace (unmerited favor) brings abundant life. The law is designed to expose all your deficiencies, but grace (unmerited favor) points you to your sufficiency in Christ. Under the law, God will leave when man fails. But under grace (unmerited favor), God will never leave you nor forsake you even when you fail. (Hebrews 13:15)

The law makes you sin-conscious, while grace (unmerited favor) makes you righteousness-conscious. The law tells you that you have failed, but grace (unmerited favor) shows you how you are more than a conqueror in Christ. The law is about what you must do, but grace (unmerited favor) is all about what Jesus has done. The law puts the burden on you to perform, while grace (unmerited favor) puts the burden on Christ’s performance. The law makes you self-conscious, but grace (unmerited favor) makes you Christ-conscious. I trust that you are beginning to see that the new covenant of God’s unmerited favor, which God says is “established on better promises,” (Hebrews 8:6) is far more superior to the old covenant of law.

⁴² Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 100-101.

There was a time in church history during the dark ages where God's Word was kept from man. Interpretation of the Scriptures was limited to an exclusive group of people, and they used this to control and manipulate the masses. All kinds of heresies and beliefs that were based on man's traditions and not God's Word were used to keep people in fear. This shows us that without God's Word, the Church has no light. Thanks be to God that today, His Word is available in many languages. God's people no longer have to be subject to the interpretation of the Word based on the traditions of man, but they can read the Word and search out the heart of God for themselves. In addition, God has raised up the fivefold ministry of new covenant pastors, teachers, apostles, prophets and evangelists to equip the body of Christ.⁴³

Sit Under New Covenant Ministries

Be sure that you are receiving from a ministry that is established on the new covenant of grace, and not from a ministry that slips in and out of the two covenants. Failure to rightly divide God's Word leads to confusion and God calls this "mixture." He cannot bless mixture, which portrays Him as being angry with us sometimes because of our failure to keep the law, but wanting to bless us at other times because of His grace. Mixture teaches that God is happy with us sometimes, but at other times, our fellowship with God is broken because of our failures.

A believer can find no peace, no assurance and no confidence in mixture. You cannot put new wine into an old wineskin because you will lose both. (Mark 2:22) The law will lose its convicting power to lead you to Christ if it is balanced with grace. Grace will lose its essence of being unmerited, unearned and undeserved when people are told that they still need to depend on themselves and their works to deserve God's presence and favor. It is an outright contradiction. What man calls "balance," God calls "mixture."⁴⁴

⁴³ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 101-102.

⁴⁴ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 102-103.

Test Everything You Hear With God's Word

I encourage you to test everything you hear with God's Word. I always tell my church to read the Bible for themselves instead of simply swallowing all that any preacher, including myself, says. Be wise and don't just swallow everything—hook, line, sinker, fisherman and even his boots! Be discerning when you hear something that does not sit well in your spirit, such as when a preacher tells you that “God gives you sicknesses to teach you a lesson.” Ask yourself, “Is this in line with the new covenant of God's unmerited favor? Are there new covenant scriptures to back this teaching up?”

The answer is obvious once you align it with Jesus and what He has done on the cross for you! Why would God give you sicknesses when Jesus has taken every sickness and disease upon His own body at the cross? With full assurance in your heart that sickness is not from God, you can have faith to be healed! But what assurance can you have if you believe the lie that the condition is from God? Now, instead of thinking that God is against you, you realize that He is on your side! Your confidence is restored, faith is renewed and His healing can flow unabated through every cell, tissue and organ in your body!

To end this chapter, let me just share with you the words of Miles Coverdale, who said:

“It shall greatly help thee to understand scripture, if thou mark not only what is spoken or written, but of whom, and unto whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstance, considering what goeth before, and what followeth after.”⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Coverdale's Dedication and Preface, Coverdale's Bible. Retrieved 23 April 2009 from www.bible-researcher.com/coverdale1.html

In essence he was saying that to understand the Bible, we need to read everything in its context. What powerful advice from the man who translated and produced the first English Bible in the 16th century. My friend, rightly divide the covenants whenever you read the Bible and you will never be ashamed. Now that you have received Jesus into your life, you are under the new covenant and it is your new covenant right to enjoy Jesus' unmerited favor to succeed in life!

Chapter Six: The Prayer of Success

I want to share with you how you can depend on Jesus' unmerited favor to be found at the right place at the right time. Turn with me to Ecclesiastes 9:11, which says:

The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favor to men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all. —Ecclesiastes 9:11 NKJV

This is a very interesting passage, written by the wisest man who ever walked the earth (other than Jesus). His name is Solomon and he is the son of King David.

In the system of the world, the race goes to the swift, the battle to the strong, bread to the wise, riches to men of understanding and favor to men of skill. The world's system of reward is based on meritocracy and achievement. In other words, you will succeed in life based on how swift, strong, wise, knowledgeable and skillful you are. It is based entirely on you and your abilities.

Listen closely to what I am saying. There is essentially nothing wrong with this system of reward in the world. Meritocracy is a good system and it has caused nations to flourish, communities to prosper, and given people the incentive to create opportunities for themselves. However, as new covenant believers in Christ, while we are living in the world's system that is based on meritocracy, we have a supernatural advantage because we have the unmerited favor of Jesus.

God Chooses The Weak To Bring Down The Mighty

God is interested in your success. Even if you are not the swiftest, strongest, wisest, most knowledgeable and most skillful in the natural, God can still bless you with good success when you depend on His grace. You can rise above the system of meritocracy through His undeserved, unearned and unmerited favor. The system of the world only rewards the strong, while those who are weak are neglected and in some cases, even despised. But, in Jesus, there is hope for the weak. God's way is completely opposite from the world's way. According to 1 Corinthians 1:26:

“not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.”

Isn't it fascinating to discover that while the world looks favorably upon the wise, mighty and noble, God does not? Let's see in the next verse what God chooses instead:

“God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty.”

Isn't it amazing? God has chosen the foolish and weak things to qualify for His abundant blessings. But the verse does not say that the foolish and weak things will remain foolish and weak. Instead, by God's unmerited favor, they will put to shame the so-called wise and mighty things in this world. In His hands of grace, the foolish and weak things become even wiser and mightier than the wise and mighty things of the world.

Why does the Lord choose foolish and weak things to confound the wise and mighty things of this world? The answer is simple. It's so that “no flesh should glory in His presence.” (1 Corinthians 1:29) God chooses the things that are weak in the natural so that no man can boast of his own ability. All glory rebounds to the

Lord and as the Bible tells us, “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 1:30-31)

It is Jesus, His wisdom in your life, His righteousness and His perfect redemptive work on the cross that make you a success. So, when you boast of your success, you can boast only in Jesus. Without Jesus, you have nothing to boast about. But with Jesus in your life, you can boast in Him and Him alone for every success and blessing that comes through His unmerited favor. If you are strong, mighty and wise in yourself, then God’s unmerited favor cannot flow. But when you realize your weaknesses and foolishness, and depend on Jesus instead, that is when His unmerited favor can flow unhindered in your life.⁴⁶

We see this in the story of Moses. In his first 40 years as an Egyptian prince who was looked up to and admired, he thought that he knew everything. The Bible says that in this first 40 years, Moses was “a man of power in words and deeds.” (Acts 7:22) but God could not use him. However, in the next 40 years, something happened to Moses. He had fled Egypt after killing an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew, and went to dwell in the Midian desert. He became a shepherd and was no longer considered mighty in words nor deeds. Indeed, he had even become a stutterer. (Exodus 4:10) And at this point in his life, when he probably thought that he was a has-been, insignificant compared to what he had been, and that his glory-days were behind him, God appeared to him and said, “...I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people...out of Egypt.” (Exodus 3:10)

Forty years earlier, at the zenith of his ability, Moses could not even properly bury one Egyptian whom he had killed—he was found out and forced to flee. (Exodus 2:11-15) But now, stripped of his dependence on his human strength and mindful of his weaknesses, he stepped into his call, dependent solely on the unmerited favor of God. And this time, when Moses waved his rod over the sea, the sea covered tens of thousands of Egyptians perfectly. (Exodus 14:26-28)

The Bible tells us that “God resists the proud, but gives grace [unmerited favor] to the humble.” (1 Peter 5:5) Beloved, God will not impose His unmerited favor on

⁴⁶ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 277-278.

us. Whenever we want to depend on ourselves and our wisdom, He will allow us to do so. His unmerited favor is given to those who humbly acknowledge that they cannot succeed in their own strength and ability.

God Sent A Shepherd Boy To Defeat A Philistine Warrior

When God wanted to bring down a mighty giant who was terrorizing the nation of Israel, He sent someone who was weak in the flesh. Think about it. In the eyes of the world, what could be weaker against a trained and fearsome soldier than a young boy who had no formal military training, no armor, was dressed in a humble shepherd's garb, and did not even carry any real weapons other than a sling and five smooth stones from a brook? It is no wonder that Goliath mocked this young shepherd boy and his strategy. When David stepped into the battlefield, Goliath asked him sarcastically, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" (1Samuel 17:43)

The implications of this battle were massive. It was not just a duel or contest between two individuals. The Israelites and Philistines had agreed to each send a warrior who would represent their nation. The defeated warrior would commit his entire nation to become servants to the other nation. It would be an understatement to say that a whole lot was riding on this one fight. And who does God send to represent Israel? In natural terms, He sent possibly the most unqualified person onto that battlefield in the Valley of Elah.⁴⁷

David was not even a soldier in the army of Israel! Do you remember how this shepherd boy ended up at the battlefield to begin with? David was there to deliver bread and cheese to his brothers who were in the army! (1Samuel 17:17-20) And yet, David found himself standing on the battlefield as Israel's representative against the haughty Goliath. From delivering bread and cheese, he was now called upon to deliver the entire nation of Israel.

⁴⁷ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 278-279.

Don't Despise The Day Of Humble Beginnings

David was at the right place at the right time because he humbled himself and submitted to his father's instructions to deliver bread and cheese to his brothers. Young people, this is something you need to understand. Submission to your parents and God-appointed leadership will always cause God's favor to flow in your life, and you will find yourself, like David, at the right place at the right time!

The Bible says that we should not despise the day of humble beginnings. (Zechariah 4:10) There is nothing glamorous about delivering bread and cheese, but David did not despise it. And that put him right in the Valley of Elah, the wind blowing in his hair—a young shepherd boy with no military experience representing the nation of Israel against a mighty giant who was a man of war from his youth.⁴⁸

This is what God loves to do. He loves to take the foolish and weak things to shame the wise and mighty things of the world. Pay attention to this young shepherd's words when he stepped into battle: "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you." (1Samuel 17:45-46) What strong and bold words from a young shepherd boy!

God's Definition Of Humility

"But Dr. Charles, didn't you just say that God gives unmerited favor to the humble? David's speech certainly doesn't sound very humble."

⁴⁸ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 279-280.

That is a wonderful question. When I was a young Christian, I used to think that to be humble meant that you always had to be soft-spoken and that you should always give in to others. There was a leader in the church I grew up in who very gentle, almost apologetic in the way he spoke, and to me, that was the picture of a humble man. But in reality, humility has nothing to do with whether you are soft-spoken or walk around with a hunch. That is how the world defines humility.

The clearest way to identify humility in someone is to see if the person is Christ-occupied or self-occupied. When somebody is arrogant, proud and self-confident, he is clearly self-occupied. At the other extreme, someone who is always fearful also has a problem with pride even if he appears to be very soft-spoken and gentle. Instead of looking to Jesus, this person is self-conscious and constantly looking at himself. Both extremes are manifestations of pride. While one extreme manifests pride in terms of arrogance, the other extreme manifests pride in terms of self-consciousness. As long as a person is occupied with self, that is still pride. Humility then, is being Christ-occupied. This person knows that without the Lord, he cannot succeed, but with the Lord, all things are possible⁴⁹.

When you look at David's speech, you will see that he didn't boast in himself. His boast was not in his prowess and skill with weapons. No, he went to battle "in the name of the Lord of hosts." David was completely occupied with the Lord, whom he was confident would deliver the nation of Israel. He made no mention of his own abilities. He went on to make this even more explicit when he said to Goliath:

"Then all this assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands."

---1Samuel 17:47

I love the spirit of this young man. David knew that the battle was not his but the Lord's, and that was what gave him such boldness in standing up against Goliath, while the rest of the Israelite army cowered in fear. It is beautiful to see how this young shepherd boy had the wisdom not to touch the Lord's glory. Even before the battle took place, David declared that victory belonged to Israel and that all credit

⁴⁹ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 281.

went to the Lord. It is clear then, that even though David spoke boldly and courageously, he was not arrogant. He didn't suffer from pride or lack of humility. In fact, his boldness and courage came directly from his humble dependence on the Lord. What a glorious difference between a person who boasts in his own arm of flesh and a person like David, whose boast is in the Lord's mighty arm to deliver him!

My dear brother or sister, whatever battle you may be in right now, you can trust, as David did, that the battle belongs to the Lord. Whatever your giant may be, be it a marital situation, financial debt, problems at your workplace or a sickness that you are battling with, know this: You may be weak, but He is strong. You may be unable, but He is more than able! Whatever fight you are facing, the battle belongs to Him. True humility is to be occupied with Christ, and then you will be filled with His boldness and courage to overcome your giant!

Right Place Right Time

Never forget that “the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong...but time and chance happen to them all” (Ecclesiastes 9:11). God wants you to have the right timing— His timing, and nothing is left to chance because you are God's child. Psalm 37:23 says:

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.”

You are that “good man” because you are the righteousness of God in Christ.

Now, look at the word “happen.” In the original Hebrew text, it is the word *qarah*, which means:

“to encounter, to meet (without pre-arrangement), to chance to be present.”⁵⁰ In a nutshell, it means “right happening.”

⁵⁰OT:7136, Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon.

My dear brothers and sisters, you can depend on God to cause you to be at the right place at the right time, to have right happenings happen in your life! I am sure that you would agree that being at the right place at the right time is a tremendous blessing. You certainly don't want to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. That can lead to disastrous results.

But even if you think that you are at the wrong place at the wrong time, such as when you are caught in a traffic jam or when you miss your train, don't be too agitated. A delay can turn out to be God's protection from an accident ahead. Sometimes, a delay of just a few seconds can mean the difference between life and death!

Let me share the testimony of a brother in Christ who in 2001, wrote to share with his pastor and church family that his son's office was in the twin towers in New York. On one particular morning, his son's alarm clock did not go off and he ended up missing his regular train to work, and was late arriving at work. Had he been on time that morning, he would have been in his office when the planes plowed into the building during the devastating terrorist attacks on September 11.

In 2003, another brother shared with his church family that he had been in Jakarta, Indonesia, for a business trip. He was staying at the Marriott Hotel and he was in the lobby when a bomb went off just outside the hotel. The bomb tore through the lobby and he saw a body flying past him as the deafening blast reverberated all around him.

After the dust had settled, he found blood spattered on him and debris strewn all around, but amazingly, he was completely unhurt. At the very moment when the bomb exploded, he happened to walk behind a pillar and it protected him from the impact of the blast. Just think what would have happened to him if he had reached that pillar just a few seconds before or after the bomb went off!

No matter how intelligent you are, how fat your savings account is or how prestigious your family name may be, there is no way you can know beforehand when to position yourself behind a pillar just as a bomb that you are unaware of

explodes near you. Only God can put you at the right place at the right time. It was the Lord who placed this brother behind the pillar at the precise moment. His steps were literally ordered by the Lord. All glory to Him! Jesus is our true pillar of protection!

God's faithfulness in protecting His beloved by putting them at the right place at the right time was demonstrated even more recently. Two massive explosions rocked Jakarta, Indonesia, again on the morning of July 17, 2009, and this time both the Marriott and the Ritz-Carlton hotels were targets of terrorist attacks.

A sister in Christ was in the lobby of the Ritz-Carlton when one of the bombs was detonated in the nearby restaurant where guests were having breakfast. The force of the explosion sent glass shards flying past her, ripping into the flesh of other guests who were standing in front of her. Amazingly, she was completely unharmed!

She shared that she had initially planned to have breakfast at that very restaurant at the time the bomb exploded. That would certainly have put her at the wrong place at the wrong time. If she had done so, she could have been killed by the blast in the restaurant. However, she shared that the reason she missed her usual breakfast time that morning was that she was caught up in reading a few devotional entries from the *Destined To Reign Devotional* and spending time with the Lord in her hotel room. The "delay" she experienced in reading this book kept her away from the restaurant and saved her life! Praise Jesus!⁵¹

Put your trust in the Lord and believe that He causes all things to work together for good. Being at the right place at the right time is not always about protection from some evil occurrence.

Perhaps the Lord wants to connect you with somebody that you have not met in years, and there is just an opportunity of blessing waiting for you.

⁵¹ Prince, *Unmerited Favor*, p. 285.

I don't know how many times I have heard of believers who just happened to bump into old acquaintances or meet new people who later turned out to be a blessing to them. We have had testimonies of supernatural connections that resulted in amazing business opportunities, as well as testimonies from people who had been given job opportunities after bumping into friends whom they had not seen in years.

My dear brothers and sisters, nothing happens by chance—the Lord knows how to place you at the right place and the right time! You can depend on Jesus for right happenings. They all come by His unmerited favor and are beyond your ability to get them through careful planning and strategizing. The world says, “When you fail to plan, you plan to fail.” But you can't plan for *qarah*. This is evident in the testimonies you have just read about.⁵²

I am not against planning. All I am saying is that you should not be stressed out and uptight when things don't go as you have planned. Don't stick so rigidly to your plans that you forget to make room for Jesus' unmerited favor to flow, protect and position you. In the new covenant of grace, the Bible says that the Lord Himself writes His laws on your heart. (Hebrews 8:10) He can speak to you and guide you in everything that you do. Allow Him to lead you supernaturally!

I read another testimony from a couple who had experienced just that. It was 2004 and they had decided to spend their Christmas holidays in Penang, Malaysia. They had originally intended to spend the whole day lounging around on the beach, but one of them unexpectedly felt a strong craving to eat something that was only available on the other side of the island. They decided to flow with that desire and headed in search for that dish. Later, they realized that just a short while after they had left, the Asian tsunami hit the beachfront where they had been relaxing and destroyed everything in its path.⁵³

⁵² Prince, *Unmerited Favor*, p. 285-286.

⁵³ Prince, *Unmerited Favor*, p. 286-287.

You see, my brothers and sisters, there are no fixed formulas here. The Lord will do whatever it takes to get His children to safety. Involve Jesus in your plans and allow Him to lead you!

First Mention Of Qarah In The Bible

There is a principle in interpreting God's Word known as "the principle of first mention." Every time a word is mentioned for the first time in the Bible, there is usually a special significance and lesson that we can learn. Let's take a look at the first occurrence of the word *qarah*. It is found in Genesis 24, when Abraham sent his unnamed servant⁵⁴ to look for a bride for Isaac, his son. The unnamed servant arrived at a well outside the city of Nahor in the evening and decided to stop there. There were so many young women gathered to draw water there that he did not know who would be the right woman for Isaac. The unnamed servant prayed this prayer:

"O Lord God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham." ---Genesis 24:12 NKJV

The word "success" here is the Hebrew word *qarah*, and this is the first time it appears in the Bible. The servant essentially prayed, "Give me *qarah* this day." It goes without saying that with the Lord's *qarah* or positioning for right happenings, the servant found a beautiful virtuous woman named Rebekah, who became Isaac's bride.⁵⁵

We need the Lord to give us *qarah* every day. I encourage you to pray the prayer of that unnamed servant. Tell the Lord, "Give me success—*qarah*—this day," and depend on His unmerited favor to lead you to be in the right place at the right time!

⁵⁴ The unnamed servant is probably Eliezer of Damascus, Abraham's chief servant.

⁵⁵ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 287-288.

The Story Of Ruth

There is a beautiful story of a Moabite woman named Ruth in the Bible. In the natural, Ruth had everything against her. She was a very poor widow, and she was a Moabite, a Gentile in the Jewish nation. But even after her husband died, Ruth remained with her mother-in-law Naomi. She left her family to follow Naomi back to Bethlehem, and made Naomi's God—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—her God.

Now, because of their poverty, Naomi and Ruth could not afford to buy grain, and Ruth had to go out to the field to perform the menial task of gleaning whatever the reapers had left behind. I want you to notice that Ruth was depending on the Lord's favor for she said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor." (Ruth 2:2) Ruth was confident that God would give her favor even though she was a foreigner and had no connections with anyone in the field. She didn't even know whose part of the field she would be able to glean in.

Look at the Bible's account of what happened next:

"And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech." ---Ruth 2:3 KJV

Of all the spots in the field that Ruth could have wandered into, her "hap" was to come to the part of the field that belonged to Boaz, who was a man of great wealth, and who also happened to be Naomi's relative. "Hap" is an old English word and it means "to happen" to be at the right place. However, in the original Hebrew text, the root of this word is the word *qarah*!⁵⁶

⁵⁶ OT:4745, Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary.

When Ruth trusted in God's unmerited favor, she *qarah*-ed or happened to come to the part of the field that belonged to Boaz. To cut a long story short, Boaz saw Ruth, fell in love with her and married her. Ruth was possibly at the lowest point of her life before she met Boaz. All the natural factors were against her. But because she put her trust in the Lord, who put her at the right place at the right time, her situation was turned around completely. In fact, she became one of the few women to be mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1:5, which states that "Boaz begot Obed by Ruth." What an honor to be included in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Talk about being at the right place at the right time! Have faith in God's grace in your life.

My dear brother or sister, no matter what natural circumstances may be against you today, have confidence in the unmerited favor of Jesus and the Lord will give you what I call "*qarah* success." He will cause you to be positioned at the right place at the right time to experience success in all areas, such as physical protection, relationships, career and finances.

It does not matter if you do not have the right educational qualifications or the necessary experience. You may be born in a poor family, you may be a divorcee or a single parent, but whatever the case may be, don't give up on God's abundant grace in your life to turn your situation around. All you need is one *qarah* moment and for God's unmerited favor to place you at the right place at the right time. Have faith in His grace in your life. Your blessings are just around the corner!

There is a sister in Christ who was an orphan and a foreigner. She did not have much when she first started attending church and no one knew who she was. After hearing the gospel of grace, she began to depend on the unmerited favor of Jesus and to believe God for big things. She attended a business convention in Israel where she met with some scientists who had a special membrane technology for water treatment, and that was her *qarah* moment.

Because of God's unmerited favor upon her, these scientists wanted to work with her. She went on to start a business in the water treatment industry, and in a short time, was able to take the company public. When she decided to do so, the timing

was perfect as the scarcity of water was all over the media, and it resulted in her company being oversubscribed several times when it was listed. Talk about being at the right place at the right time!

Her success did not end there. By the unmerited favor and wisdom of Jesus, she went on to build a company that is worth several hundred million dollars today. She also won several major awards and is now recognized as the richest woman in Southeast Asia.

Not too long ago, her pastor and some of the key leaders in her church met with her. As they listened to her speak, it was obvious that this businesswoman was not only humble, but she was also someone who understood and walked in the unmerited favor of Jesus. She travels extensively for work and she shared that wherever she goes around the world, she takes along sermon DVDs and watches them in her hotel room. She emphasized how vital it was for her to keep hearing the gospel of grace to stay grounded on and rooted in the unmerited favor of Jesus.

She has truly caught a revelation of making the gospel of Jesus a priority in her life, no matter how busy she gets with her business. She is a fine example of a person who is safe for success. She has no illusions about the source of her blessings. Like Joseph in the Bible, she is conscious of the Lord's presence and knows that everything she touches will be blessed because of His unmerited favor upon her.⁵⁷

This is what I call good success!

Don't look at your natural circumstances. This businesswoman started with literally nothing, and in the natural, the odds were stacked up against her. However, as she depended on God's grace (unmerited favor), the Lord turned everything around for her in one *qarah* moment. My beloved brothers and sisters, Jesus can do the same thing for you. Pray the prayer of the unnamed servant and ask the Lord to give you *qarah* today!

⁵⁷ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 290-292.

Chapter Seven: Divine Wisdom To Succeed

In this chapter, I want to talk about how you can depend on God's wisdom to succeed. Wisdom from the Lord comes by God's unmerited favor. It is not something that you can study for or acquire with your own efforts. Wisdom from the Lord is something that the world cannot have. This is not to say that the world does not have wisdom. Visit any bookstore today and you will find shelves full of books containing experts' theories and methods on all sorts of subjects. The great majority of these, however, stem from human wisdom, which strengthens and builds up only the flesh. Whether they know it or not, the people of the world are crying out for true wisdom from the Lord. Just look at the constant demand for self-help books. But what we need is not more "self-help." What we need is the Lord's help! Read books that are written by Spirit-filled believers and Christian leaders who encourage you to look to Jesus and not to yourself.

Psalm 1:1 tells us this right at the beginning:

"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly."

This means that there is some amount of counsel in human wisdom. But the man who does not walk according to the wisdom of the world is the man who is blessed.

At the same time, if his delight is in Jesus, and he meditates on Jesus day and night, Psalm 1:3 says, "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper." Does this sound familiar? God's Word is very consistent. The promises in Psalm 1 are the same as those we covered in Jeremiah 17 about the blessed man!

My dear brother or sister, if you will make the decision to walk in the counsel of the godly and not in the counsel of the world, you will see whatever you do

prosper. God has raised up men and women who are established in the truths of the new covenant, and who will help you keep your eyes on Jesus. In Him, you will find all the wisdom that pertains to life. The Bible tells us that in Him “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:2-3) for your success.⁵⁸

See The Wisdom Of Christ In Action

See the wisdom of Jesus in action for yourself. When Jesus was on earth, He was never in a situation where He lacked wisdom. Look at what happened when the Pharisees brought the woman caught in adultery to Him. The Pharisees came to Him and quoted from the law, saying, “Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?” (John 8:4-5)

They thought that they had succeeded in trapping Jesus because if He told them to stone her, then they would accuse Him of not demonstrating the forgiveness and grace that He had been preaching about. If Jesus were to say that they should not stone her, then the Pharisees would accuse Him publicly of breaking the law of Moses and bring a charge against Him.

The Pharisees were probably confidently gloating over the clever trap that they had devised. That is why they confronted Jesus with this woman in the public area around the temple. They wanted to embarrass Him in front of the multitudes that had come to hear Him teach. Now, observe the wisdom of Jesus in operation. He simply told them, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.” (John 8:7)

What majesty! They came to Jesus with the law of Moses and Jesus gave them the perfect standard of the law. Without flinching, He simply challenged the person who was perfect before the law to cast the first stone. The Pharisees who had come to ensnare Jesus began to walk away one by one, completely silenced. This same

⁵⁸ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 294.

Jesus, with all His wisdom, is today our ascended Christ, who is seated at the Father's right hand, and whom the Bible says is "made unto us wisdom!" (1 Corinthians 1:30 KJV)⁵⁹

Before we leave this story of Jesus and the woman caught in adultery, I want you to see something important. Who was the only person on the scene who was without sin? It was Jesus Himself. But instead of condemning the woman, He silenced her accusers and showed her His grace, asking, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?... Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." (John 8:10-11 NKJV)

Isn't it amazing to know that the most powerful being in the universe is also the kindest, most gracious and forgiving One?

It is vital that you know that "God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:17) Jesus did not come to condemn us. He came to save us! By extending the gift of no condemnation to the woman caught in adultery, He gave her the power to "go and sin no more." In the same way, that is how Jesus' unmerited favor toward us brings us to repentance, and gives us the power to overcome the failures in our lives!

Our Savior is altogether lovely. He is never early, never late. He is always at the right place at the right time. He is always in perfect peace and there is no sense of hurry about Him. When it was time to be tender, He was infinitely gentle. When it was time to overturn the tables of the money changers, He did it with passion. He was never frazzled by the Pharisees' attempts to trip Him up and He was always flowing with divine wisdom. He is steel and velvet, meekness and majesty, perfect manhood and deity. This is Jesus, and you are in Him!⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 294-295.

⁶⁰ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 295-296.

You Are In Christ

What does it mean to be in Christ? It means that we are new creations. (2 Corinthians 5:17) When we are in Christ, we are blessed with every blessing. (Ephesians 1:3) When we are in Christ, we are in the secret place of the Most High (Psalm 91:1) and we are protected. When we are in Christ, we are the head and not the tail, above only and not beneath. (Deuteronomy 28:13 Don't be like the world and say things like "I am doing okay under the circumstances." You don't have to be "under" the circumstances. The Lord can cause you to rise over and above all your circumstances!

God's Word tells us that "you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." (1 Corinthians 1:30) When we are in Christ, God makes Jesus to become for us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Throughout this book, we have been talking about righteousness, holiness and your redemption through the finished work of Jesus. By now, I hope you know that the question to ask today is no longer if you are righteous or holy in God's eyes. The questions to ask are, "Is Christ righteous in God's eyes?" and "Is Christ holy in God's eyes?" When you are in Christ, as Christ is, so are you! (1 John 4:17) Is Christ healthy, full of favor and well-pleasing to God today? Then, so are you!⁶¹

All the blessings of the righteous that are recorded in God's Word are yours today. When the Bible says, "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much," (James 5:16) you don't have to wish that you were a righteous man, or go around looking for a righteous man to pray for you. My friend, you are in Christ. Christ has made you righteous. As He is righteous, so are you. Based on God's Word, that means that you can pray and have a confident expectation that your prayers will avail much! God will hear and answer your prayers. The Bible says that you have not because you ask not. (James 4:2 KJV) So be bold and very courageous, and ask God for big things!

⁶¹ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 296-297.

Here is another description of the righteous: “the righteous are bold as a lion.” (Proverbs 28:1) That’s describing you, beloved. You don’t have to be intimidated by your circumstances. You are bold and you have the courage to face off with any giant in your life. Whether you are facing giants of financial lack, sickness or depression, they are all bread for you.

Did you know that the greatest boldness you can have, when you are established in righteousness, is to stand before God with no fear or consciousness of sin, and to receive His unmerited favor? When you are confident of your righteous standing based on Christ’s righteousness, you don’t have to be afraid that God will come after you to judge or condemn you. You are free to be bold with the Lord and claim His promises for you even when you have failed, or I should say especially when you have failed.

God wants us to “come boldly to the throne of grace [unmerited favor], that we may obtain mercy and find grace [unmerited favor] to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:16) Notice that for the believer, God’s throne is not a throne of judgment. It is a throne of grace, a throne of unmerited favor. You can have the courage to believe for God’s favor in your life only when you are secure in your righteousness in Christ. So be sure that you are believing right today.

Wisdom Is The Principal Thing

Now, notice that in 1 Corinthians 1:30, Christ is made unto us wisdom first, then righteousness, holiness and redemption. Wisdom comes first! Jesus as our wisdom is given first importance. There is a difference between wisdom and knowledge. Knowledge puffs up. (1Corinthians 8:1) It can make one proud and arrogant. But wisdom will make you humble and teachable. You can read extensively and accumulate a lot of knowledge, but still lack wisdom. You also don’t become wise just by growing older and having more experience in life. Wisdom is not natural. It does not matter if you are young or old, experienced or inexperienced, highly educated or not. Wisdom comes from God’s unmerited favor.

Listen to what God's Word says about the importance of wisdom:

“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore, get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding. Exalt her, and she will promote you; she will bring you honor, when you embrace her. She will place on your head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory she will deliver to you.” ----Proverbs 4:7-9 NKJV

Promotion and honor all come as a result of receiving Jesus as your wisdom.

Let me share with you the testimony of Pastor Joseph Prince, New Creation Church, Singapore about wisdom:

“I remember how the key thing that I would pray for every day in the early days of our church was for the wisdom of God to guide us in everything that we did. That was my focus. I did not want to manage the church with my own wisdom. I wanted to depend on Jesus' wisdom. In fact, it was during this time of believing for God's wisdom that the Lord opened my eyes to the gospel of grace!

“When my eyes were opened to the gospel of Jesus' unmerited favor, lives began to be tremendously changed and transformed, and from just a few hundred people in the mid-nineties, our highest attendance for our Sunday services to date was more than 22,000 precious people. Whenever I am asked to explain how we grew the church, my answer is plain and simple—it was and is entirely by the unmerited favor of Jesus. I know that it is grace and grace alone that caused our church to experience such explosive growth.

“Before our church experienced such an explosion in numbers, the Lord asked me if I would do something. As I was spending time in His presence and reading His Word one day, He asked me if I would preach Jesus in every sermon. To be honest, my first thought then was that if I preached only Jesus in every message, many people would stop coming and the size of our church would shrink. Then, the Lord asked me, “If people stop coming, will you still preach Jesus in all your messages?” Like all young pastors, I was ambitious and wanted to grow the

church, but I submitted to the Lord and said, “Yes, Lord, even if the church grows smaller, I will keep on preaching Jesus!”

“Little did I know that this was actually a test from the Lord, because from the moment I began preaching Jesus, unveiling His loveliness and the perfection of His finished work every Sunday, as a church, we have never looked back. I didn’t realize that throughout all those years of praying for wisdom, the wisdom of God would lead me to the unveiling of the gospel of grace—the gospel of grace that is unadulterated by the law and man’s works, and based entirely on the finished work of Jesus. That is what wisdom does. It will always lead you to the person of Jesus and the cross!

“Today, the same gospel of grace that we preach every Sunday in our church is being broadcast into millions of homes across America, Europe, the Middle East and the Asia Pacific region. We started as a little church in Singapore that nobody had heard of, but God’s unmerited favor has blessed us to become an international ministry that is impacting the world with the good news of His unmerited favor. We take no credit for it because this wisdom is from Jesus, and our boast is in Him and Him alone.”⁶²

The Spirit Of Wisdom

We have talked about how wisdom is the principal thing, but do you know what the “spirit of wisdom” is? Look at the prayer that the apostle Paul prayed over the church in Ephesus:

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is

⁶² Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 300-301.

the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power” —Ephesians 1:17–19 NKJV

Are you understanding this? The spirit of wisdom and revelation is in the knowledge of Jesus! The more you know Jesus and have a revelation of His unmerited favor in your life, the more you will have the spirit of wisdom. I challenge you to pray this prayer for wisdom on a regular basis because when you increase in the knowledge of Jesus, He will surely lead you to good success in every aspect of your life.

Note that when Paul was praying this prayer for the believers in Ephesus, they were already filled with the Holy Spirit. But Paul still prayed that God would give them a spirit of wisdom and revelation in their knowledge of Jesus. It is one thing to have the Holy Spirit inside you, but it is another thing to let the Holy Spirit inside you flow as the spirit of wisdom and revelation. When the Holy Spirit leads you in the wisdom of Jesus, there will be no impossible situation, no insolvable problem and no insurmountable crisis. The wisdom of Jesus in you will help you to successfully navigate all your trials and cause you to prevail over all your challenges.

The Secret To Solomon's Wisdom

Let's take a look at the life of Solomon. When Solomon became king, he was only a young man of about 18 years old and had big shoes to fill as David's successor to the throne. Solomon was not filled with wisdom when he first ascended the throne, but he was clearly very earnest. He went to Mount Gibeon, where the tabernacle of Moses was, to offer a thousand burnt offerings to the Lord. At Mount Gibeon, the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream and said, "Ask! What shall I give you?" (2 Chronicles 1:7)⁶³

⁶³ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 302.

Now, think about this for a moment. What would you have asked for if you were in Solomon's position? Solomon did not ask for riches. Neither did he ask to be honored by all men. Instead, he told the Lord, "...give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people; for who can judge this great people of Yours?" (2 Chronicles 1:10) The Bible records that Solomon's request "pleased the Lord" (1 Kings 3:10) and the Lord replied, "Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked riches or wealth or honor or the life of your enemies, nor have you asked long life— but have asked wisdom and knowledge for yourself, that you may judge My people over whom I have made you king— wisdom and knowledge are granted to you; and I will give you riches and wealth and honor, such as none of the kings have had who were before you, nor shall any after you have the like." (1 Chronicles 1:11-12)

The Book of 1 Kings tells us that Solomon told the Lord, "Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" (1 Kings 3:9) So when Solomon asked for wisdom and knowledge, he was asking for an understanding heart. Let's go deeper. The word "understanding" here is the Hebrew word *shama* (She-MA), which means "to hear intelligently."⁶⁴ In other words, Solomon had asked for a hearing heart—one that hears from and flows with the leading of the Spirit of God, who leads us into all truth. (John 16:13) You need a hearing heart for God's wisdom to flow through you in every aspect of your life!

I believe that the same request that pleased the Lord then pleases Him today. God is pleased when we ask Jesus for wisdom. To ask Him for wisdom is to put ourselves in a posture of trusting and depending on His unmerited favor. Only the humble can ask Jesus for wisdom and a hearing heart. Although Solomon only asked for wisdom, the Lord added "riches and wealth and honor" to him. Too many people are chasing riches, wealth and honor, not realizing that they come through the wisdom of Jesus. Even if someone were to come into sudden wealth, without the wisdom of Jesus to manage it, the money would be squandered away. But with the wisdom of Jesus, you won't only be blessed, you will also be able to

⁶⁴ OT:8085, BibleSoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary.

hold on to the blessings in your life. Jesus makes you safe for good success that produces lasting and abiding fruit from generation to generation.

Coming back to Solomon, let's see what he did right after receiving wisdom from God. David had instituted worship at Mount Zion, not at Mount Gibeon. What were left in the tabernacle of Moses at Mount Gibeon were merely the physical objects, structure and form. It had the lampstand, table of showbread and altar of incense. But the most important furniture in the tabernacle—the ark of the covenant, which had the presence of God—was missing.⁶⁵

King David had a special revelation of the ark of the covenant and had brought it back to Jerusalem and placed it on Mount Zion. We see that for some reason, Solomon was into tradition before he received wisdom. While he was sincere in seeking the Lord at Mount Gibeon, the Lord's presence was actually at Mount Zion. The tabernacle of Moses only had the form, but the substance of the presence of the Lord was with the ark of the covenant in Jerusalem. But notice this: Once Solomon had received wisdom from the Lord, the first thing that he did when he awoke was to go to Jerusalem where he “stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, offered up burnt offerings, offered peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants.” (1 Kings 3:15)

Wisdom Makes You Value Jesus' Presence

How can you tell if somebody has received wisdom from the Lord? The first thing that he will do is value the presence of Jesus! Once Solomon was inundated with God's wisdom, he left the formal structure in the tabernacle of Moses and went to look for the Lord's presence in Jerusalem. After receiving wisdom and a hearing heart, he valued and treasured the Lord's presence. In the same way, when you receive God's wisdom, it will not draw you away from church. Instead, it will cause you to want to receive even more from God's Word and from the presence of Jesus.

⁶⁵ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 304-305.

“Dr. Charles, what is so significant about the ark of the covenant?”

The ark of the covenant is a picture of Jesus. It is made of wood, which speaks of Jesus’ humanity, (Isaiah 55:12; Mark 8:24) and it is overlaid with gold, which speaks of Jesus’ divinity. (Isaiah 2:20; Song of Solomon 5:11, 14-15) Jesus is 100 percent Man and 100 percent God. In the ark are three items: The stone tablets of the Ten Commandments, Aaron’s rod, which had budded, and a golden pot of manna. These items represent man’s failure and rebellion against God’s perfect law, His appointed leadership and His provision, respectively.⁶⁶

Let’s take a look at God’s heart for His people. He gave instructions that these symbols of man’s rebellion be placed inside the ark and covered with the mercy seat! The mercy seat is where the high priest would sprinkle the blood of the offering to cover all the failings and rebellion of the children of Israel.

The three items in the ark of the covenant are the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments, Aaron’s rod which had budded and a golden pot of manna. The ark of the covenant is but a shadow. Today, we have the substance of the finished work of Jesus at the cross, where the blood of God’s own Son, not the inferior blood of bulls and goats, was shed to blot out all our sins, failings and rebellion once and for all!

Is it any wonder that in battles in which the children of Israel appreciated the value of the ark, they emerged victorious? In the same way today, it is a clear indication of God’s wisdom upon your life when you value and appreciate the person of Jesus and what He did for you at the cross. And because the true ark of the covenant is with you all the time, you can’t help but be triumphant, successful and victorious in any battle that you may be in. Solomon realized this and immediately pursued the presence of the Lord after he awoke from his dream. My dear brothers and sisters, go after the presence of Jesus in your life. He is your wisdom and victory over every battle today!

⁶⁶ Prince, *Destined To Reign*, p. 208-209.

The high priest sprinkles the blood of the offering on the mercy seat to cover all the failings and rebellion of the children of Israel.

Wisdom And Length Of Days

The Bible promises something else when you have wisdom: “Happy is the man who finds wisdom...Length of days is in her right hand, in her left hand riches and honor.” (Proverbs 3:13-16) Unfortunately for Solomon, he only had the left hand of wisdom, which holds riches and honor. The Lord had said to him, “...if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments...then I will lengthen your days.” (1 Kings 3:14)

For Solomon, who was under the old covenant of law, the blessing of length of days was a conditional one, which he could receive only if he was able to keep the law perfectly. However, Solomon failed to do so and he did not enjoy length of days, which is in wisdom’s right hand. But because we are under the new covenant of grace today, Jesus is the Father’s right hand and our wisdom. And when we have Jesus, we can be blessed with the two hands of wisdom because of His finished work on the cross. This means that riches and honor, as well as length of days, belong to us! What an awesome God we serve!

My Beloved brother or sister, pursue Jesus and you will experience wisdom in every area of your life. You cannot try to earn, deserve or study to acquire God’s wisdom. It comes by His unmerited favor. His wisdom will give you good success in your career. It will cause you to succeed as a student, parent or spouse.

For instance, if you are facing some problems in your marriage, God will not just “zap” your spouse and make him or her do a moonwalk and come back to you! The same thing that drove your spouse away from you in the first place will just drive him or her away again. What you need is wisdom for your marital situation!

If you are faced with a crisis in your business, depend on the Lord for His wisdom. There are no “money problems,” only “idea problems.” Trust that the Lord will bless you with the wisdom from heaven to cause everything that you touch at your workplace to prosper. God’s wisdom always leads to promotion and good success.

God’s Wisdom Brings Promotion

In Genesis 39:3–4, we see how when Potiphar saw that the Lord was with Joseph, and that everything he touched prospered, Potiphar immediately promoted Joseph and placed him in charge over all the affairs of his house. Similarly, when Pharaoh saw that the Spirit of God was in Joseph and that there was none who was as wise and as discerning as Joseph, Pharaoh placed him in charge of the whole of Egypt. (Genesis 41:38-41) But you need to note this: Joseph knew that God was the source of his wisdom. When Pharaoh said, “I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream, to interpret it,” Joseph immediately replied, “It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace.” (Genesis 41:15-16) Joseph knew that his wisdom was a result of the Lord’s unmerited favor and would not take any personal credit for it. Clearly, here was a man who understood grace, and could be trusted with increase, promotion and more good success.⁶⁷

Observe the wisdom of Joseph in action. Joseph did not just interpret Pharaoh’s dream. He went on to advise Pharaoh on how to take advantage of the seven years of abundance to prepare for the seven years of famine that were revealed in his dream. Did you notice how Joseph’s wise advice led to the creation of a position of influence for himself? That is how the wisdom of the Lord operates. Proverbs 18:16 says, “A man’s gift makes room for him, and brings him before great men.” Joseph knew that his wisdom was a gift from the Lord. He knew that he did not earn it and that it flowed from the Lord’s unmerited favor toward him.

⁶⁷ Prince, Unmerited Favor, p. 308-309.

The Lord's ways are amazing. See the extent of Joseph's promotion in Genesis 41. In the space of less than an hour, he rose from a lowly prisoner to the highest possible office in all of Egypt. That, my friend, is the unmerited favor of God! No striving, no self-effort, no compromises and no manipulation, just pure grace and grace alone made all the difference in Joseph's life!

Don't forget what we covered at the beginning of this course. When the Lord is with you, you are a successful person. It may feel like you are in a prison now, stuck in a hopeless situation, cast away and forgotten like Joseph was, but the story is not over yet! The Lord's promotion is around the corner. Whatever situation you are in right now, do not give up.

If you are caught in a situation and you don't know what to do, it is time to humble yourself and ask the Lord for wisdom. The Bible says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him." (James 1:5) To ask the Lord for wisdom is to say, "I can't, Lord, but You can. I give up on my own efforts and depend entirely upon your unmerited favor and wisdom." As you receive His wisdom, riches and honor, as well as long life, will follow after you. Run to Him right now!

Chapter Eight: The One Thing That Brings Success In Every Area

Do you know what is one thing you can do that will bring success in every area of your life? Meditating on the Word of God. It is something that the Lord taught me to do even when I was a teenager, and by the grace of God, I believe it has made my life what it is today. Even before I learned about grace, the Lord taught me to meditate on His Word. In fact, I think meditating on the verses that the Lord had highlighted to me when I was younger is one of the reasons I could understand grace when He began to really open my eyes to it. Listening to the Word is so important, but don't stop there. As you hear, get hold of what speaks to you, meditate on it, and make it yours.

When reading the Word of God, one of the things I enjoy most is meditating on the faith pictures that the Bible so eloquently articulates for us. In the world we live in, the news, social media, medical reports, and other information sources tend to paint negative images of sickness, death, poverty, terror, and darkness. But praise the Lord, we may be in this world, but we are not of this world (see John 17: 11, 16). In Christ, we have been redeemed from the curse and don't have to live in fear and hopelessness. As the world gets darker and darker, the church (that includes you and me!) is getting brighter and brighter (see Isa. 60: 2). Don't allow the news media to paint images that suffocate your heart with fear. Look for God's faith images in His eternal, everlasting, and unshakable Word that will establish and stabilize your heart!

Have a Faith Image from His Word

One of my all-time favorite faith images is found in Psalm 1. Would you read it with me right now? As you read it, may the Lord paint a picture of faith in your heart of the blessings that you are meant to enjoy in Christ!

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law, he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.” —Psalm 1:1–3 NKJV

Instead of seeing the negative depictions of the world, you can see yourself like a tree planted by the rivers of water. We’re talking about many rivers, not just one. What a beautiful picture of constant provision, with rivers of water sustaining and refreshing you all the time. Even if one river runs dry, there are other rivers flowing. You do not have to fear the reports about new strains of diseases, terrorist attacks, and economic downturns because whatever may be happening around you, even if there is drought in the rest of the land, you are that tree planted by rivers of fresh, flowing water. And don’t miss this detail— you did not just randomly grow by the river. Someone planted you! Surely the One who planted you will also tend to and take care of you!⁶⁸

This psalm goes on to say that you will bring forth fruit in season. See yourself not being barren in any way, but fruitful in every area, including in your finances, in your body, and in your ministry. See yourself with leaves that shall not wither; instead, they shall be perennially green, fresh, and full of sap. What this speaks of is that you will always be young, strong, and full of life and energy. The Lord will cause your youth to be renewed like the eagle’s (see Ps. 103: 5). Leaves in the Bible also speak of healing.

⁶⁸ Prince, *Live The Let-Go Life*, p. 204.

In Revelation 22: 2 it says:

“The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”

This means your health will be evergreen; it will not fail you!

But Psalm 1:1–3 doesn’t stop there. It goes on to say:

“whatever he does shall prosper.”

What a powerful promise! Whether you are a judge, nurse, homemaker, businessperson, student, or banker, whatever you do shall prosper! Even if you make a mistake, the Lord can cause it to prosper! Don’t you love the Word of God? In just a few verses, it has given you a picture of the blessings He has for you. Whatever challenging circumstances you might be facing in the natural, let His eternal Word replace every negative expectation of evil with a positive expectation of good because of what Christ has done for you!

The Key to Walking in His Blessings

What is the key to being the blessed man planted by rivers of water? Psalm 1:2 tells us that “his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law, he meditates day and night.” His delight is in the Word of the Lord— he savors and enjoys the Word of the Lord. Spending time in the Word is not something he does legalistically, but because he does it with revelation, it gives him delight, or “great pleasure” and “a high degree of gratification,”⁶⁹ such that he meditates on God’s Word day and night!

Let’s look at the word meditates in Psalm 1:2. It is translated from the Hebrew word *hagah* (he-goh), which means to utter or mutter, to speak in a low voice as is

⁶⁹ Retrieved November 9, 2017, from www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/delight.

often done by those who are musing.⁷⁰ God's way of meditation is not just to think in your head but to also mutter with your mouth.

In previous courses, we saw how important it is to hear God's Word through a preacher. But the miracle of meditation is this: As you meditate on and mutter God's Word to yourself, you are being a preacher to yourself! As you speak out the verses, do you know what you are doing? You are hearing yourself preach about the Lord Jesus. You are hearing yourself preach life into your situation. And as we saw in the last chapter, faith comes as you keep hearing and hearing the word of Christ! Look at what God tells Joshua when he first takes over the reins of leadership from Moses:

“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” —Joshua 1: 8

Notice that God tells Joshua that the Book of the Law shall not depart from his mouth— it's your mouth, not so much your mind, that you use in meditation. Take a word of Scripture and mutter it under your breath day and night “that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”⁷¹

Don't you think it's interesting that meditation and prosperity in every area are linked in both Psalm 1 and Joshua 1? I want to be clear that when I use the word prosperity, I'm not talking about finances only. True prosperity is holistic. It touches every area of your life, including your relationships, your family, your peace of mind, and your health. I also think it's interesting that the Bible specifies that you will have good success. This implies that there is bad success. If you are financially “successful” but have no time to enjoy being with your family, have

⁷⁰ OT: 1897, Joseph Henry Thayer, Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *The Online Bible Thayer's Greek Lexicon and Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon*.

⁷¹ Prince, *Live The Let-Go Life*, p. 206-207.

alienated your friends, and are always working and don't get to do the things you enjoy, that doesn't sound like good success to me. By the way, in the Old Testament, they meditated on the Torah or the law of God. How much more blessed would you and I be when we meditate on the perfect, finished work of our Savior today under the new covenant!

Maybe you are thinking to yourself, I don't know how to meditate on God's Word, let alone meditate on it day and night! Let me ask you this: Do you know how to worry? If you know how to worry— if you can think about the negative things that could happen to you, fear all the things that could go wrong, or see a bleak future— then you know how to meditate. The truth is, we are all meditating on something day and night. Many are meditating on their work troubles, their health conditions, or their financial challenges.

Our heavenly Father is showing us a better way. He is showing us how to live the let-go life by letting go of our worries and replacing them with His Word. And as we do that, we will be like the fresh and flourishing tree described in Psalm 1! You may not have time for many things, but you can't afford not to have daily time in the Word. It really doesn't take long for you to read and memorize just one verse and meditate on it throughout the day. Can I encourage you to give it a try today?

Power to Overcome Our Challenges

Psalm 1 is very special to me because there was a period when I had to handle several issues at the same time. During this time, our church was also faced with the challenge of having to raise funds to pay for our new premises at The Star. I was beset with demands, and I knew that in and of myself I did not have the capacity to do what was required. Over this trying period, instead of worrying and running around trying to solve all the problems, I decided to stay still and rest in the knowledge that the battle was not mine but the Lord's.⁷²

⁷² Prince, Live The Let-Go Life, p. 208.

I have started meditating on the Word more than ever before, and one of the passages I highly recommend you to study is Psalm 1:1–3. What I have shared with you about this passage hardly skims the surface of what you can discover when studying it. In spite of the challenges we were facing in the natural, I kept seeing myself as the blessed man, and I claimed the promise that whatever I touched would prosper. By God’s amazing supply of grace, The Star building project is completely paid off today. Truly, except the Lord builds the house, our labors are in vain. Meditating on His Word gives us the power to let go of our cares to Him.

How to Meditate on God’s Word

Would you like to learn how you can meditate on His Word? There are other ways to go about doing it, of course, but let me share how I meditate on God’s Word. I listen to or watch a Joseph Prince sermon each day. I also read a chapter from one of Pastor Prince’s books or several devotional entries from one on of Pastor Princes devotional books. Another writer I often use is Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. He has written many excellent commentaries. Dr. Lloyd-Jones takes a passage of scripture and exegete’s it. You will learn much from reading and meditating on his commentaries.

Now days you don’t have to carry a book or commentary around with you. A devotional to meditate on is as close as your Smart Phone, Kindle, Nook or Tablet. With Bible apps freely available today, many people literally walk around with Bibles in their pockets. You might even have several Bible apps on your smartphone. Why not try meditating on a verse when you have pockets of time during the day, instead of spending all your free time checking your social media feeds? I can guarantee that meditating on His Word will benefit you more than finding out what your friends ate for lunch or what their pets are up to. For instance, if you are going through a financial situation and your thoughts are

causing you to have panic attacks, stop holding on to your worries. Let go and counter those fears by muttering His promises to yourself throughout the day!⁷³

When you are being attacked by worrisome thoughts, meditating on His Word is the best remedy. Every time the enemy keeps you awake with fearful thoughts, simply say, “Since you want to keep me awake, I’ll meditate on the Word!” That’s what I learned from David, who said, “I meditate on You in the night watches” (Psalm 63: 6). I take a verse and I quote it to myself a few times, chewing on it over and over again. Many times, I fall asleep and wake up feeling so rested the next day. I don’t think it’s a natural rest, but a supernatural rest because of the power of God’s Word!⁷⁴

Power in Meditating on One Verse

Let me show you how meditating on just one verse can bless you:

“He who did not spare His Own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” —Romans 8: 32 NKJV

A verse like this could last you a whole week. Don’t rush through it. Break it into portions and take your time to meditate on each portion, turning them around to allow every truth in them to speak to your heart and nourish you. did not spare His Own Son.” Whom did God not spare? His own Son. Not an angel or a person, but His Own Son. The word own is so precious. It tells us that God was personally and deeply affected. He did not send someone else’s son; He sent His own. He did not spare His Own Son— His only Son, the Son whom He loved. Doesn’t that remind you of another father in the Bible who got to spare his son? Genesis 22: 12 records how God had withheld Abraham’s hand from sacrificing his son as a burnt offering. But God did not withhold His hand when it came to His Own Son. Why

⁷³ Prince, Live The Let-Go Life, p. 211-212.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 212.

did God not spare Jesus? So that you and I could be spared. Who are we that God Almighty would do this for us!

You can also chew on how God “delivered Him up for us all.” God delivered up His Own Son. He gave Jesus up into the hands of the ruthless soldiers to be cruelly scourged, beaten, stripped, mocked, and, finally, nailed to the cross, suspended between heaven and earth for six agonizing hours. Our Lord Jesus was not taken by the soldiers. His Father delivered Him into their hands. Can you imagine how God the Father must have felt as He gave up Jesus, knowing what His Son would have to go through as our sin offering? Knowing that He would have to turn away from His Own Son when He became sin on the cross?

And God delivered Him up “for us all.” He gave Jesus up, not for angels, but for us. And not for those who deserve it or who have lived perfect lives, but for us all. His love for us is unqualified and completely undeserving. He died for us while we were yet sinners. We had nothing to offer Him except our brokenness, our shame, and our failures. Yet, God chose to deliver our Lord Jesus up for us all! How awesome is the grace that saved even a wretch like me!

Camp out on portion that says, “how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” When we know how much God has done for us, the enemy has no way of selling his lies to us successfully. When the enemy tries to plant the lie that God will not supply that financial need that you have or heal that symptom in your body, you can declare, “How shall He not!” And meditate on how God answers prayers not with a miserly hand or with conditions attached, but freely! God gives freely! Doesn’t that make you want to jump up and sing? If God already gave us His best when He gave us Jesus, what is the rest to Him? What is a job opportunity, a child, favor with a client, healing for your body, wisdom for your exams, or a life partner to Him? Hallelujah!⁷⁵

Is faith already bursting forth in your heart like it is in mine? All we have been doing is meditating on one verse. Now that you have seen how meditating on just

⁷⁵ Prince, Live The Let-Go Life, p. 214.

one verse can yield such rich truths, I pray you will start making it a daily habit to meditate on God's Word, one verse at a time!

Meditation in the New Testament

Earlier, we looked at Psalm 1 and Joshua 1, which gave us a picture of how the Lord blesses us as we meditate on His Word. Let's look at what the New Testament has to say about meditation:

“Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”

—1 Timothy 4: 15– 16 KJV

As you meditate upon teaching and doctrine and give yourselves wholly to them, the Scripture passage above us says that you will see “profiting” in your life. What you have on the inside will be manifested on the outside so that it becomes obvious to everybody— your profiting is demonstrated to all. The passage goes on to say, “in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”

The Apostle Paul was writing to Timothy, who was already saved. So why did Paul say that Timothy would save both himself and those who heard him? It's because the word save here is translated from the Greek word *sozo*, and as we have learned, *sozo* is a very rich word that also means to heal, preserve, and protect. In this context, it is not referring to being saved from hell. Paul was basically telling Timothy:

“If you preach out of your meditation and take heed to the teaching that you've meditated on, you will heal yourself as well as heal those who hear you. You will preserve yourself, as well as others. You will prosper yourself, as well as others.”
Amen!

By the way, if you don't want your way to be prosperous, can I give you some advice? Don't touch God's Word, as it has power in it to prosper your way. I don't know if you have experienced this before, but personally, when I neglect reading the Word, it seems like that day feels so short with not enough hours in it to solve my problems. In contrast, when I give time to God's Word even when many other things are calling for my attention, the day would be long but full, with so much more accomplished. This is why I believe it is so important for us to do the "one thing needful" (see Luke 10: 42 KJV). The more we need to accomplish in a day, the more we can't afford not to spend time with the Lord and meditate on His Word!

Set Free from Long-Term Depression

I was encouraged when I read this praise report from Paula and I want to share it with you:

"I am writing to say thank you.... for pointing me to Jesus.

"Even though I was taught that Jesus is my Savior, I spent many years under the works of the law. I always tried to be good but always felt there was one thing I lacked. I battled with depression constantly even as a young child— it was a chronic and powerful stronghold that kept me captive. Many hours and much money spent on professional counseling, medical doctors, alternative doctors, supplements, and medication did not help me at all.

"One day, my six-year-old happened to leave the television on when she left the room. I headed over to turn it off and that was when I heard Pastor Prince being interviewed. His words grabbed my heart like nothing I had ever experienced before. I thought to myself, "He knows my Jesus!" Immediately, I grabbed the remote control and recorded the interview. I watched it over and over, pausing it often to take notes. I began reading his book *Destined to Reign* and fell completely

in love with Jesus and my Bible. I spent many hours reading, watching, and taking down notes daily.

“When I first heard Pastor Prince sing the words of Psalm 34 on his program, it immediately became my theme song. I sang it day and night, whenever I was troubled and gripped with fear. Sometimes, I could barely choke out the words, but I kept singing the psalm and it never failed to bring comfort.

“I was privileged to attend Pastor Prince’s event in Dallas, Texas. When he said that some people would be set free from chronic conditions, I believed the word was for me. I didn’t feel any immediate change in my body, just a deeper faith to trust God that my breakthrough would come.

“Sometime later, I suffered another round of depression marked by overwhelming feelings of hopelessness and despair. It was extremely discouraging as I had been focusing on Jesus and the gospel of grace for nearly two years, spending time in Scripture and confessing them over my life, partaking of the Holy Communion daily, praying and singing in tongues, declaring away self-righteousness in me, and doing my best to rest in Him.

“I kept wondering what I was missing to break free from depression. One day as I was driving, I asked God to deliver me from being a whipping post. I even let out a big yell to let the devil know that I was done letting him steal my peace! I felt a new fire in me that I can’t really explain, but I felt like I came to a whole new level of not just knowing but truly believing that my heavenly Papa wanted me free from depression. I boldly rejected depression in Jesus’ name, declaring His victory for me at the cross. I immediately felt the depression start to dissipate, and by evening, I was feeling much better. I also talked to my heavenly Papa about the evil day that I felt had lasted way too long, and boldly declared my desire to see the good days His Word has promised.

“I am writing because I feel such an urge to spread hope to others with chronic strongholds. I would say to them that no matter how long it takes, no matter how hopeless you feel, keep believing, stay focused on Jesus and His victory at the cross, and never give up. I believe the devil tries to hit the hardest when you’re

closest to your victory, so hang in there! God’s grace will do for you what you can never do for yourself. Keep confessing the righteousness you have as a gift and believe you are loved no matter how you feel. Depression is not from God!

“Trials and emotions still come on some days, but I have confidence inside that I am not alone and they will pass as I keep praising Him and professing His Word. This way, I don’t fall hopelessly into depression anymore.”⁷⁶

Did you see how Paula spent time daily to read, watch sermons, and take down notes on what she was hearing? She sang the words of Psalm 34 to herself day and night whenever she was troubled and gripped with fear, and kept praising God and declaring His Word. That’s how she kept herself meditating on God’s Word day and night. And as she kept feeding and feeding on His truths, she was set free from depression that had kept her bound for years. Whatever strongholds have bound you, I pray that Paula’s testimony will strengthen and encourage you. Start by finding Scriptures that you can make your “theme song” and mutter those Scriptures to yourself over and over again until you are strengthened from the inside. As you keep meditating on the Word of God, His Word promises that whatever you do shall prosper!

Don’t Gobble— Savor God’s Word!

Feeding on God’s Word is not like going to the drive-through or wolfing down fast food. There is nothing wrong with listening to sermons while you are commuting. In fact, I encourage you to do that! But can I also encourage you not to just gobble down God’s Word on the go, but take some time each day to really meditate on the verses that you hear or read?

You can just begin with one verse a day. It’s not about how many chapters you read, but the depths that you plunge into, and how deeply you go to really digest and think about the words that the Holy Spirit chose, and why He phrased it the

⁷⁶ Prince, *Live The Let-Go Life*, p. 216-218.

way He did. Take time to be like a cow chewing on the Word, turning it around and around in your mouth and savoring it until the essence of one verse becomes such a truth that it drowns out the facts that could be staring you in the face.

It may be true that there is a troubling symptom in your body. But, do you know what? The truth of God declares:

“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (Rom. 8: 11).

It may be a fact that the amount you have in the bank is dwindling. But the truth is that “God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work” (2 Corinthians 9: 8). It may be a fact that your doctor has said it is not possible for you to have children. But the truth is:

“You shall be blessed above all peoples; there shall not be a male or female barren among you or among your livestock” (Deuteronomy 7:14).

Light and darkness cannot exist in the same space. Meditate on His Word and let it drive out all fear and all stress. As you make a decision to prioritize and meditate on His Word each day, His truths will overshadow every negative fact! May you become like the blessed man planted by the rivers of water, always bringing forth fruit in season. May whatever you do prosper in the Almighty name of Jesus. Amen!

Chapter Nine: Greatly Blessed & Highly Favored

We have taken an exciting and wonderful journey to understand the Lord's unmerited favor and we are now at the climatic chapter of our journey. I pray that God has opened your eyes to the exceeding riches of His grace (unmerited favor) in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus, and given you a revelation of what it truly means to be righteous by faith and not works.

We are washed by the blood of Jesus, filled with His Spirit and clothed with His righteousness. When Jesus died on the cross for our sins, the veil that separated us from the Lord's holy presence was rent in two, (Matthew 27:51) and a new and living way to God's holy presence was opened. Today, we can enter boldly into the holy of holies with no fear or trepidation because we are not standing in our own holiness, but Christ's. Beloved, do you know what an awesome privilege this is? To do this was impossible under the old covenant of law.

Under the old covenant of law, the only person who could enter the holy of holies where the ark of the covenant stood was the high priest of Israel. And even the high priest could not enter anytime he wanted. He was only allowed into the presence of God once a year, on the Day of Atonement. But today, you and I have free and complete access into Jesus' presence any time. Jesus is with us all the time. This means that we can be a success at all times, in everything that we do!⁷⁷

The Divine Exchange At The Cross

As we prepare to wind down, I want to make sure that before you close this commentary, you will have full assurance of your perfect standing in Christ today. Let me reiterate what the new covenant is in very simple terms to you. In the old covenant of law, God told the nation of Israel that unless they kept His

⁷⁷ Prince, Unmerited Favor p. 311.

commandments perfectly, He could not accept them. But God Himself found fault with the old covenant because man could never fulfill its requirements, and He decided to make a new covenant that was based entirely on the perfect work of Jesus.

In the new covenant of unmerited favor, God essentially said, “I have a better way. Let Jesus keep perfectly all the laws on your behalf. And even though there is no sin in Him, let Him pay the price for all your law-breaking. Let Him carry all the punishment that you deserve. Once all your sins have been judged on Jesus’ body on the cross, I will never punish you for those sins again. All you need to do is to accept Jesus and believe all the good things that He has done, and I will put all that He has accomplished to your account, and give you all the blessings, favor and success that My Son deserves.

“As for all the wrong things that you have done and will ever do, I will put them all to His account—on the cross, He will bear all the judgment, condemnation and punishment that you deserve for your sins. This way, all the good things that He has done become yours, and all the bad things that you have done and will do become His at Calvary!”

This is why we call it the gospel of grace. “Gospel” means “good news,” and this is GOOD NEWS indeed! Even if you don’t fully understand the theological differences between the old and new covenants, you simply need to understand the divine exchange that occurred at the cross and you will already have a profound and intimate understanding of the gospel of Jesus. What am I saying here? I am telling you that you do not need to be a Bible scholar to understand the gospel. You simply need to know the person of Jesus and all that He has done for you! You need to know that the moment you accepted Jesus, God gave you an eternal “A+” for your right standing with Him. You need to know that today, you can enjoy favor with God. It is completely undeserved and unmerited, and it is yours because of what Jesus did on the cross!⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Prince, Unmerited Favor p. 312-313.

How To Increase In God's Unmerited Favor

God's Word tells us that "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." (Luke 2:52) This is a good verse to pray and speak over your children—that they first increase in favor with God, and then in favor with man. Your "vertical relationship" with God should always be given priority over your "horizontal relationship" with the people around you. Like Jesus, you can increase in wisdom and in God's unmerited favor. How? You have probably noticed that some believers seem to experience a lot more unmerited favor than others. I believe that this is because these believers understand the key to accessing God's favor. Romans 5:2 clearly spells out that "we have access by faith into this grace [unmerited favor] in which we stand." To gain access to your computer or your bank account, you need a password. To gain access to and increase in God's unmerited favor, the "password" or the key that we need to have is faith, faith to believe that YOU, _____ (insert your name), are highly favored!

One of the things that I have taught my church members to do is to declare over themselves that they are greatly blessed, highly favored and deeply loved.

"How do we know that we are greatly blessed, Dr. Charles?"

Read Hebrews 6:13–14 for yourself. God wanted us to be so anchored in the sure and steadfast knowledge that He will bless us, the seed of Abraham, that He swore by Himself, saying,

"Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." "How can we say that we are highly favored?" ---Hebrews 6:13-14 NKJV

Ephesians 1:6 tells us that by God's grace (unmerited favor), God "made us accepted in the Beloved." In the original Greek text, the word "accepted" is the word *charitoo*, which means "highly favored."⁷⁹

"And are we really deeply loved by God?"

God didn't just love us. John 3:16 says that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." He demonstrated how He SO loved us when He sent Jesus to die on the cross for us.

I pray that the verses that I have shown you here and throughout this book will help you believe that through Jesus, you are indeed greatly blessed, highly favored and deeply loved. If these truths are still not established in your heart, start speaking them. Look at yourself in the mirror every morning and declare boldly: "Because of Jesus' perfect work on the cross, I am righteous by His blood, and I am greatly blessed, highly favored and deeply loved! I expect good things to come my way. I expect good success and I have a confident expectation of good!"

Once you receive Christ, you are standing on favor ground. You are no longer on condemnation ground. God looks on you as His favorite child!

"But Dr. Charles, how can God have so many favorites?"

Hey, He is God. Don't try to limit an infinite God with your finite mind.

The Bible tells us that God counts the very hairs on each of our heads. (Matthew 10:30) His love for each of us is intimate and deeply personal. In His eyes, we are all His favorites!

⁷⁹ NT:5487, BibleSoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright © 1994, 2003, 2006. and International Bible.

The Story Of Esther

When you know that you are greatly blessed, highly favored and deeply loved, you don't have to depend on your self-efforts. Look at the story of Esther, for example. When King Ahasuerus was looking for a new queen, the most beautiful women in the land were all brought into the palace. All the women were given the opportunity to adorn themselves with whatever they desired from the women's quarters before they were brought for an audience with the king. But when it was Esther's turn, she "requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised." And look at the results: "Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her," (Esther 2:15) and the king "loved Esther more than all the other women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen." (Esther 2:17)

While the other women grabbed the best garments, perfumes and accessories to beautify themselves, Esther did not rely on her own abilities but submitted herself to Hegai, the official who had been appointed by the king to oversee the women. There was so much wisdom and humility in her decision. Can you see the beauty of Esther? She did not trust in her own efforts. While the women tried to outdo one another by relying on their own efforts, Esther wisely submitted to the one person who would know the king's preferences best, and the results speak for themselves.

This incident also demonstrates to us that Esther depended entirely upon the Lord's unmerited favor. When you depend entirely upon the Lord's unmerited favor, you are in a position of rest, trust and ease. Esther did not have to struggle. When she rested in the Lord and humbled herself, the Lord promoted her and exalted her above all the other beautiful women. God resists the proud and gives unmerited favor to the humble. (1 Peter 5:5) When you humble yourself and cease from your own efforts to promote yourself, and depend on Jesus and Jesus alone, the Lord Himself will be your promotion and increase. Like Esther, you will stand out in a crowd and obtain grace and favor with God and man.

Do you know why the story of Esther is so important? Read the details in the Book of Esther. Because Esther was promoted to become the queen, she was in a favored position to protect all the Jewish people in the kingdom from being killed. When the Lord promotes you, He gives you the influence to be a blessing to the people around you. There are no coincidences, only God-incidents. The Lord will bless you to be a blessing!

Having Favor Does Not Mean That You Won't Face Problems

When God's unmerited favor is shining on you, good things will happen to you. However, at the same time, I want you to be aware that you might also face some problems that arise because of the favor on your life. For example, if you are a businessman, you will have more business than you can handle. If you are a doctor, patients will be forming long lines to be treated by you. But these are "good problems" to have.

So unmerited favor does not mean that you won't have any problems in your life. But remember, even in the midst of those problems, God's almighty grace is sufficient for you, and in your weakness, His strength is made perfect! (2 Corinthians 12:9)

Having Favor Does Not Mean That Everybody Will Like You

Enjoying God's unmerited favor in your life also does not mean that everybody you meet will like you. I believe that you will have favor with a large majority of people, but there might be a handful of people whom you just don't seem to have favor with. Let's look at Jesus' life because the same favor that is on His life is on yours today.

When Jesus began His ministry at 30 years old, multitudes flocked to Him everywhere He went. For example, Matthew 4:24 says that "His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted

with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them.”

Jesus had so much favor that when He stood before Pontius Pilate, Pilate actually tried various means to release Jesus. In fact, Jesus had to keep His mouth shut in order to have Himself crucified. He knew that if He opened His mouth and spoke with God’s favor and wisdom, He would have been released.

Listen, my brothers and sisters, Jesus was not murdered! He laid down His life willingly. He chose to be led like a lamb to the slaughterhouse. He had the power at any time to stop the soldiers who held Him. In fact, the men who had gone to arrest Him in the Garden of Gethsemane fell to the ground when He said, “I am...” (John 18:6) Jesus had to wait for them to get up of the ground to arrest Him!⁸⁰

Jesus chose to be subject to the beatings, abuse and scourging. He chose to be crucified on the cross at Calvary. Through it all, you and I were on His mind. He endured every act of torture, so that He could wash away all our sins and reconcile us to God. How can we help but love and worship our Savior, who paid such a heavy price for our salvation?

While Jesus had favor with pretty much everyone, there was one group of people He did not have favor with—the self-righteous, self-seeking, legalistic Pharisees. Similarly, when you look at Joseph’s life, you will see that he had so much favor with his father Jacob that Jacob gave him an exquisite coat of exquisite fine linen. But Joseph did not have favor with his elder brothers. They were filled with such envy and hatred for Joseph that they threw him into a pit and sold him as a slave.

Unfortunately, the self-righteous Pharisees and the jealous “older brothers” are still around today. Their dependence is on their own flesh and they operate under the system of “deserved favor” based on the law. That is why they hate and envy people who walk under God’s grace, which is unmerited, undeserved and unearned favor. So, don’t be surprised that you do not have favor with self-righteous people when you are walking in God’s favor. In fact, you may find that as you grow in the

⁸⁰ Prince, Unmerited Favor p. 318-319.

favor of God, some people will write terrible things about you, attempt to assassinate your character and drag your name through mud.

Nevertheless, just don't worry about them. They are fast becoming a small minority. There is a revolution of the gospel all over the world as people are rediscovering the gospel that our Savior died to give us. Just focus on the Lord's favor in your life and believe that indeed, "No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment You shall condemn." (Isaiah 54:17) You don't have to try to defend yourself because God's protection surrounds the righteous. The psalmist says, "For You, O Lord, will bless the righteous; with favor You will surround him as with a shield." (Psalm 5:12)

What a beautiful promise in God's Word. God's favor is like a shield encircling you, protecting you from those who come against you. Picture that for your own life and experience His loving protection!⁸¹

Personalizing God's Favor In Your Life

There was a time when I thought that out of all of Jesus' 12 disciples, John was the Lord's favorite disciple and the one who was the closest to Him because the Bible calls John "the disciple whom Jesus loved." (John 21:20) I was under the impression that John had a special favor with Jesus, and always wondered what made him so special that he stood apart from the other disciples. Don't you want to be known as the disciple whom Jesus loves? I do!

Then one day, when I was studying God's Word, I discovered the secret of John's favor. The Lord opened my eyes and showed me that the phrase "the disciple whom Jesus loved" is actually found only in John's Gospel! Check it out for yourself. You will not find this phrase being used in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. It is found only in the Gospel of John. It is a phrase that John used to describe himself!

⁸¹ Prince, Unmerited Favor p. 320-321.

Now, what was John doing? He was practicing and personalizing the love that Jesus had for him. We are all God's favorites, but John knew the secret of accessing Jesus' unmerited favor for himself. It is your prerogative to see yourself as the disciple whom Jesus loves, and to call yourself that! When I began to lay hold of the fact that the secret of John's favor lay in his personalization of God's love, I literally stepped into a new dimension of experiencing God's unmerited favor in my life. I have seen how others have really took this revelation and ran with it. Some of them customized the wallpapers of their cell phones to say "The disciple whom Jesus loves," while others signed off their text messages and emails with the phrase.

As they kept reminding themselves that they are the disciple whom Jesus loves, they began to grow in the consciousness of the Lord's love for them. At the same time, they began to grow in being favor-conscious! I have read praise reports on how others have been so blessed just by being conscious of Jesus' favor in their lives. Some of them have been promoted, some have received spectacular increases in their paychecks and many have won various prizes at company functions and in other contests, including all-expense-paid vacations. One brother I read about, signed up for a certain credit card during a special promotion in which new applicants stood to win a range of prizes. There were probably hundreds of thousands of people who participated in this promotion, but this young man just believed that he was highly favored, and because of that, he would win the top prize.

The day of the draw came and true enough, this young man won the top prize—a stunning black Lamborghini Gallardo! When he wrote to the church to share his testimony, he enclosed a picture of himself smiling from ear to ear, posing with his brand-new Lamborghini. He said that he knew that he had won the car by the unmerited favor of God, and after he had sold off the car, he brought his tithe to the church, giving all glory and honor to Jesus. The world calls this "luck," but for the believer, there is no such thing as luck. There is only the unmerited favor of Jesus!⁸²

⁸² Prince, *Unmerited Favor* p. 326.

My dear brothers and sisters, I pray that you will learn to personalize God's favor in your life. When you realize that you are not just a face in the crowd, but someone whom God—the Creator of all heaven and earth—is passionately in love with, you can't help but want to live a life that glorifies your Abba. And the more you are conscious of how precious you are to Jesus and how favored you are because of Him, the more you will increase in favor with God and man. Get ready to see good success in your life as you become more and more Jesus-conscious. And remember, you are greatly blessed, highly favored and deeply loved!

Closing Words

My dear brothers and sisters, we have come to the end of this course and before we close, I want to make sure that you know the secret of the beloved, which is to know that you are deeply, deeply loved by Almighty God. Knowing this truth will cause you to be established in the unmerited favor of God and to always carry a sense of favor-consciousness wherever you go.

All Christians probably believe that God has the power to bless, heal, protect, prosper and make someone a success. However, we know that not all Christians believe that God is willing to do all that for them. Matthew 8:1–3 records the story of a leper who came to Jesus for healing. He said, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.” The leper did not doubt Jesus’ ability to heal him, but he was unsure if Jesus was willing to heal him, a leper who was ostracized by all. In other words, he believed in God’s omnipotence, but was not sure if God’s heart was one of love and unmerited favor toward him. I am sure that you know believers who are like that. They may believe in God’s power, but they are unsure of God’s heart toward them. They know that God can, but they are not sure if He is willing.

This is one of the biggest tragedies in the church today. When these believers hear testimonies of believers being healed by the Lord, they are unsure if God is also willing to heal them. When they read praise reports of the Lord blessing others with promotions and financial blessings, they privately question if God is also willing to do the same for them. They wonder what these people did to get their blessings.

More tragically, they look at their own lives, imperfections and failings, and start to disqualify themselves from receiving God’s blessings. They think, “Why would God bless me? Look at what I’ve done. I am so undeserving.” Instead of having faith to believe God for their breakthroughs, they feel too condemned to be able to believe in God’s goodness and receive anything good from Him. My friend, don’t be like that leper who completely misread Jesus! Let’s see how Jesus responded to

him. This is important because it would be the same response that Jesus would give you if you approached Him today.

“I Am Willing”

Matthew 8:3 records that “Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’” Can you see how personal Jesus’ ministry is? He did not touch every person that He healed. At times, He simply spoke and the sick were healed. But in this case, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched the leper tenderly. I believe that Jesus did this to heal him not just of his leprosy, but also of the emotional scars that he had received from years of rejection.

Leprosy was a highly contagious disease and the law forbade lepers from coming into contact with anyone. This means that for years, this leper had been shunned by everyone who saw his condition, even his own family members. He probably stank of decaying flesh and neglect, and his appearance must have been repulsive.

But without flinching, Jesus touched him, giving him the first human touch, he had since he contracted the disease. The Bible tells us that immediately, his leprosy was cleansed and the man received his healing. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever.¹ Whatever breakthrough you are believing Him for, He says to you, “I AM WILLING.” Don’t doubt His heart of love for you any longer. Stop being occupied by your own disqualifications and be completely absorbed in His love and grace (unmerited favor) toward you!

Throughout this Course, I have endeavored to show you how it is God’s delight to bless you with good success in every area of your life through His unmerited favor. While success to the world comes by one’s self-effort, willpower and striving by one’s own strength, God’s way to supernatural, effortless success is for you to depend totally on His unmerited favor. This unmerited favor, which you do not deserve and cannot earn for yourself, will perfect every imperfection in your life and transform every area of weakness and struggle that you are facing now into testimonies of His grace and power.

Many believers are living lives of defeat today because they are depending on their own obedience to the law to be blessed. They do not know that Jesus' unmerited favor IS the new covenant that we can enjoy today, made possible only through the cross and the obedience of Jesus Christ. This means that we can move from merely experiencing a little bit of His unmerited favor here and there to seeing it permeate every aspect of our lives.

I trust that as you have taken this exciting journey with me into the heart of our heavenly Father to bless you through the finished work of Jesus, God has been laying a strong foundation in you that will set you up for every success in life. [unmerited favor] and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”

The more you know and see Jesus, the more God's unmerited favor and peace will be multiplied in your life. That is why from chapter to chapter, I sought to unveil the person of Jesus and the perfection of His finished work. The more you see Him, the more you will move from self-occupation that brings stress, frustration and defeat, to Christ-occupation that releases the peace, joy, divine wisdom and supernatural ability to handle every challenge in life. I want your life to be radically blessed, and this can only

It is my heart's desire to see God's grace and peace multiplied in every aspect of your life. Once more, let me bring your attention to 2 Peter 1:2. It says:

“Grace [unmerited favor] and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”

The more you know and see Jesus, the more God's unmerited favor and peace will be multiplied in your life. That is why I have, from chapter to chapter, sought to unveil the person of Jesus and the perfection of His finished work. The more you see Him, the more you will move from self-occupation that brings stress, frustration and defeat, to Christ-occupation that releases the peace, joy, divine wisdom and supernatural ability to handle every challenge in life.

I want to see your life to be radically blessed, and this can only happen if the unmerited favor of God is radically preached to you, and I pray I have done that in this course.

My dear brother or sister, I hope you have enjoyed reading this course material as much as I have enjoyed writing it.

There were some surprises when doing the research for this commentary. Like many, I assumed that the topic of Success in Life was a fairly well understood subject, but what I realized is how little the topic is understood from a biblical perspective. It was quite surprising to find how little most Christians (including myself) actually know about the subject.

The topic of Success and Unmerited Favor from a biblical perspective and its effects on people has been and remains a poorly understood subject. It is my prayer and hope that we may find that rediscovering the Biblical teachings about Condemnation can enrich our lives and our ministries.

Many believers are defeated today because they do not know the God of the new covenant of grace. I believe with all of my heart that because you took this wonderful journey with me you saw for yourself, all the things concerning Jesus Christ and His finished work, your heart would now burn with His extravagant love for you. Jesus truly puts the “amazing”, the “wonderful” and the “marvelous” back into grace!

Today, God is all about blessing you with His grace — His undeserved, unearned and unmerited favor — in every area of your life. Stop trying to deserve and earn your own acceptance before God with your own works and efforts. It will only frustrate the grace of God and nullify the effects of the cross in your life. My Dear brother or sister, Jesus already finished the work! Believe with all your heart that it is not about what you need to do today, but about what has already been done and accomplished on your behalf.

My Beloved brothers and sisters, I have proclaimed to you the gospel of Jesus Christ and am fulfilling the commission He gave me to bring Jesus back to central

place in the church by rolling away the stone and opening people's eyes to reveal more of Jesus and His finished work. I know that if you have believed this good news of His grace, your life has begun to be radically transformed, together with the countless believers around the world who have already been impacted by the Gospel Revolution. I pray that this course has torn down the fences of controversy that the enemy has erected around the teaching of God's grace and the gift of righteousness, so that you may indeed receive not just grace, but the "abundance of grace", and receive not just righteousness, but the "gift of righteousness", and start reigning in life. Start reigning over sin, over sickness, over condemnation, over financial lack and over the curse of the law through the ONE, Jesus Christ.

All that I have shared works most powerfully and effectively within the environment of the local church. These truths are for the greater good of the body of Christ and should never result in you becoming a law unto yourself. Beloved, I want to see you enjoying the safety of the covering of a local church where there is accountability and submission. This is where our blessings are tremendously multiplied.

I thank you for taking this journey with me and for giving me the opportunity to unveil more of Jesus to you. You have been a wonderful traveling companion. We should do this again soon! In the meantime, until the next course begins,

BE BLESSED!!!

In His Grace, *Dr. Charles*.

I look forward to hearing from you about how our Lord Jesus has touched and impacted your life with His amazing grace.

It is all about Jesus and His finished work!

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