Understanding the Favor of God



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There is much talk nowadays about the favor of God and how any Christian can automatically possess it. Without a doubt, God has tremendous things for us and has an awesome plan for His children to fulfill, but possessing His favor isn't automatically available to those who profess Christ as Savior and Lord. Here, we're going to examine the favor of God by defining what it is, explaining how we obtained it, and discussing its purpose.

WHAT IS THE FAVOR OF GOD?

Simply put, the favor of God can be defined as the generous treatment His children receive from others because Jesus is seen in them. This favor is mostly seen when someone displays an unusual act of generosity to one of God's children because they reflect His image. It is revealed uniquely in each person, according to God's sovereign plan. It isn't some enchanting spell God's children cast over others but is the compelling presence of Jesus Christ within them that draws out of others a desire to be generous to them.

HOW DO WE OBTAIN THE FAVOR OF GOD?

The best example of how we can obtain God's favor is by looking to Joseph. In Genesis 39:3, we read that his master saw the Lord was with him. God's favor, then, is bestowed upon us when people see Jesus in us. There's no magical formula for this to happen. When certain people see Jesus in us God's favor is bestowed upon us in whatever ways He deems necessary to fulfill His will.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF GOD'S FAVOR?

If God's favor is that unusual generosity given to us because people see Jesus in us, then the purpose for receiving it is *directly connected to His character*. In short, it is designed to reveal God's glory and to further His kingdom. We see this in the stories of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Jesus.

Ezra found favor in the eyes of king Darius and was given whatever he needed to rebuild the temple of God (Ezra 6:8-10). That favor was to be used for the express purpose of doing God's will (Ezra 7:18-20; 27-28). Nehemiah did the same thing in rebuilding the temple wall (Neh. 2:8). And, of course, Jesus stewarded God's favor upon Him (cf. Lk. 2:52), revealing God's glory and executing His redemptive plan for humankind. Each one of these examples illustrates what we are to do with God's favor. It is never given for our selfish ambition but is intended to propagate the gospel of Christ.

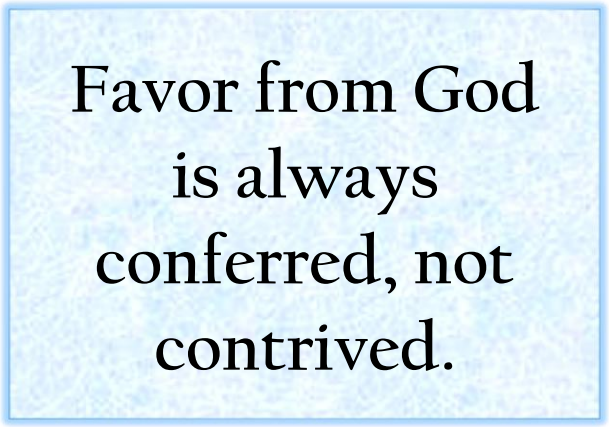
Let's further this thought a little more. Because God's favor is given to those who reflect the image of Jesus, *it must be used to continue to reflect that image.* Because the church is under a direct command by the Lord to make disciples of all nations, His favor upon us is to be used for that purpose. At the very least, it should not be used to discredit The Great Commission. Again, God's favor is designed to further *His* plan not ours.

It is important we understand this, because there is a counterfeit favor which some Christians manufacture on their own. On the surface, they may be "blessed" with all manner of things, but underneath that veil of "favor" lies a manipulating heart. They use seductive techniques to sway others into their corner. *However, genuine favor from God is always conferred, not contrived.* Ezra would never have employed crafty techniques to win someone's favor and sway them to his side. (Even Esther, a queen herself, never resorted to manipulation. She simply depended on God's mercy to carry her through her time of crisis.)

Bottom line: We must recognize that when God bestows His goodness upon us, we don't have to depend on slick salesmanship to get it. It simply comes to us. If we must persuade others to bless us, then we are no longer reflecting the image of Jesus, but are instead tarnishing it.

Also, there are those who abuse and misuse God's favor, and when they do this, they prove to be unfaithful stewards. For example, when God bestows His favor upon us, it is never a license to break the rules only because certain people who favor us can bail us out of a dilemma. When a believer does that, God's favor loses its purity---and His name is blasphemed. (Can you imagine Joseph breaking an Egyptian law simply because he knew Pharaoh entrusted him with all of Egypt?)

Full-counsel biblical teaching clearly reveals what God's favor is, what its purpose is, and for what it's designed. From the Old Testament to the New, God's favor is designed to further His plan. We are never to use it for selfish gain. Now, this doesn't mean His blessings upon us cannot be enjoyed in normal



and recreational ways. It simply means we must steward them faithfully. If God should bless us with financial means, for example, that blessing must be used in ways that either promote the gospel or, at the very least, do not discredit it.

In short: God's goodness must be utilized and enjoyed wisely, because we are ambassadors for Christ, and whatever we do, we do it in His name, which means our actions are viewed as reflections of who God is.

In the end, the favor of God is not automatically conferred upon all His children, but only on those who reflect His image. When Jesus is seen in us, we will receive unusual generosity from others, and when that kindness arrives it should not diminish the image of Christ in us.

It should enhance it.