

October 16, 2016—Fall Quarter 2016—Sunday Morning Bible Class

UNMERITED FAVOR

Your supernatural advantage for a successful life

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Chapter 4

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 2:1-2) 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 Pastor Prince, 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?"

Great 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 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.

God is for you today because of the blood of the perfect Lamb-Jesus Christ.

Now, think about this for a moment. 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! (Isaiah 54:17)

YOU CAN'T EARN GOD'S FAVOR BECAUSE IT IS A FREE GIFT

"Well, Pastor Prince, 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?"

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 friend, 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.

On the other hand, 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.

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 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 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 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?

**The presence of Jesus in your life is a free gift from God.
There is no number of good works that you can perform to merit
His favor.**

My friend, 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! (Hebrews 13:5)

"But Pastor Prince, when I fail, doesn't Jesus leave me?"

No, 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, "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." (Psalms 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 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!

When you are doing right, He is with you. Even when you have failed, He is still with you!

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 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" 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!

DON'T EVALUATE GOD'S PRESENCE AND UNMERITED FAVOR BASED ON YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES

Now that you know that God's presence 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"! 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?"

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

And boy, 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, like it was upon Joseph, (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 ain't over, my friend. I wrote this book to tell you that it ain't over! I don't believe for one moment that among the millions of books in publication right now, you are holding 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 ain't 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!

Your lowest points are launching pads to God's greatest promotions.

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!

HOMEWORK:

1. Name one what do you need the most? _____
2. Where is the presence of Jesus? _____
3. **Maybe If Hopefully** God is for us, who can be against us?
4. Do you know what is in 'opposition, adversity, or adversary' against you?

5. Name one (opposition, adversity, or adversary) can defeat you or stand against you?
6. Name one item that God fights, defends, and vindicates (to clear from accusation) you and God is on your side?
7. Y N NS: If you fail, can Jesus' blood washed you whiter than snow?
8. What the blood of the Lamb do?
9. T F: God does bless you, as a new covenant believer, based on your perfect behavior and conduct.
10. Y N NS: Is God's Unmerited Favor on your side?
11. Y N NS: All of heaven's resources are yours because of Jesus' blood.
12. Can you describe what are the heaven's resources?
13. Why can't you earn God's favor? Because _____.
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 _____ will put them in favor with God and _____ God to be on their side.
14. God is not with you _____ of what you do or don't do, or _____ of what you have done or not done. That kind of thinking still places the focus on _____. God's love for you is conditional or unconditional. He is about: **rules** or **relationship**
15. The 'legalism' is all about **rules** or **relationship** you need to keep and how often you should do something.
 - Christianity becomes a life of legalism for Christians who _____ that _____ 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.

- Does God answer your prayers because of **your merit** or **Jesus' merit**?
- Is God on your side because of **your merit** or **Jesus' merit**?
- It's important to get these foundational truths right and not slide _____ and _____ of trying to _____ God's favor when He wants us to receive everything through His unmerited favor.
- When you do these things, do them from a heart:
 - a) that has to
 - b) that wants to
 - c) both
 - d) ?

16. It should be:

- 👉 because you have an abiding _____ that Jesus' presence is with you,
- 👉 because you have an _____ that His unmerited favor is toward you and a certainty that He is on your side.

17. And out of that overflowing abundance of _____ for His love that you are undeserving of:

- ✓ you desire to _____ His voice and _____ His face,
- ✓ you begin to _____ in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding,
- ✓ you begin to _____ Him in all your ways,
- ✓ and you begin to _____ Him to direct your paths.

18. What is 'a free gift' from God? _____

19. Y N NS: You must deserve His presence in your life!

20. Y N NS: If you sin, His presence immediately leave you!

21. Jesus' purpose is to _____ you and _____ you to WHOLENESS.

22. Y N NS: Is Jesus a faithful, dependable and trustworthy friend?

23. Y N NS: If you truly have failed, Jesus is right there with you, ready to pick you up and restore you to wholeness?

24. Under the law in the O.T. where God would be with you _____ when you were in complete _____. But when you failed, God **would** or **would not** leave you.

25. Today, however, you and I are under a completely same or different covenant and God will never leave us. Why?

- 👉 Because of what Jesus did on the Cross.
 - At the Cross, Jesus became your _____.

- Jesus bore your _____ and carried your _____.
- God's judgment against your sins fell upon whom? _____
- Name one who was forsaken by God at the Cross? _____
- Today, you can have God's _____, _____ presence in your lives.

26. THE DIVINE EXCHANGE took place:

👉 At the Cross, Jesus took your sins and gave up what?

👉 While you took Jesus' righteousness and received what?

27. What is this '*ou me*' in Greek word mean? _____

28. Like last week the word 'context'...take that word 'text' out of 'context' which become a 'con'. Do not let anyone 'con' (trick, swindle) or tell you that you can forfeit the presence of God. Stop listening. Don't let them rob you of the certainty of God's presence in your life.

29. You **do** or **don't** evaluate God's presence and Unmerited Favor based on your circumstances like the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife.

30. When the Unmerited Favor of God is upon you wherever you are, like it was upon Joseph:

👉 you cannot help but find what? _____

👉 everything that you do cannot help but what? _____

👉 and you cannot help but _____ increase and _____ beyond your wildest imagination.

31. 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 _____ right up to the top!

32. Don't be discouraged by your current circumstances. Things may sometimes appear bleak, dismal and perhaps, even devastating, but it _____ !

33. There are many times where the lowest points in your life are ACTUALLY the launching pads to God's greatest _____ in your life. You need to rewind the tape and observe the fingerprints of the Lord through the ups and downs of your life (also Joseph's life)

34. You have seen how God's presence with Joseph and His Unmerited Favor caused Joseph to be promoted:

👍 from the _____ to the _____,

👍 from the _____ to _____,

👍 from the _____ to the _____.

35. You stop looking at your what? _____ You stop allowing them to _____ you. The same Lord who was with Joseph is with _____ right now. _____ cannot fail. _____ can expect to see success beyond my present circumstances!

PRAY DAILY:

Father, I am so glad that I have Your constant, unceasing presence in my life because of the divine exchange at the Cross. Whether I am up or down, happy or sad, have done right or done wrong, You are with me. Your help, protection, provision, strength, and shalom are on my side. I have nothing and no one to fear in Jesus' Name. Thank You! Amen. You God alone is the source of my success, favor, and blessings. I thank You that You are for me and not against me. You are interested in my success and because Your Unmerited Favor is upon me. Today, I rest in Your love and Your good plans to set me up for success. Thank You again. Amen.