

December 4, 2016—Fall Quarter 2016—Sunday Morning Bible Class

UNMERITED
FAVOR

Your supernatural advantage for a successful life

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God's Covenant of Unmerited Favor with us

My friend, as we talk about God's unmerited favor in your life, there is something I want you to know: God's unmerited favor is not just something that you pray for at certain moments, such as when you are preparing for a job interview or about to deliver an important presentation. Of course, you can ask the Lord for His favor in such situations, but the reality is that His unmerited favor in your life is so much more! God's unmerited favor is a covenant. Why settle for just having momentary experiences of His favor in your life when you have full, constant access to the everlasting covenant of His favor?

When you understand this covenant that you have through Jesus Christ, you will go beyond merely catching glimpses of His unmerited favor here and there, and become conscious of how His unmerited favor permeates every aspect of your life, beginning with your relationship with Jesus. You will begin to see His undeserved favor manifest in your family life, career and relationships. Get ready to see God's favor becoming more and more evident in your life and be astounded by its results.

Guys, get ready to be given the best seats in the house when you bring your date out for a romantic dinner. Get ready to receive special discounts "for no apparent reason." Ladies, begin to see how relatively empty boutiques fill up with customers after you step in because you carry God's unmerited favor everywhere you go. And when the presence of the Lord is with you, everything you touch becomes blessed. You are a blessing waiting to happen!

God's UNMERITED FAVOR is A COVENANT YOU HAVE WITH HIM.

This unmerited favor that you can enjoy is a covenant you have with God. Earlier in this book, you saw how a covenant is much more than just a legal contract. To help you establish yourself in the covenant of God's unmerited favor, let's dive deeper into the study of covenants in the Bible. I want you to have a better understanding of the covenant that we are under today.

Throughout history, God has cut several covenants with man. These include the Adamic, Noahic and Abrahamic covenants, just to name a few. But the two central covenants are the old covenant of Moses and the new covenant of Jesus. If you understand these two major covenants and know how they are distinctively

different, I believe that you will have an unshakable foundation for your faith and confidence in God's unmerited favor.

Various terms have been used to describe these two covenants. As discussed in the previous chapter, the old covenant is so called because it is old and has become obsolete. It is also known as the Mosaic covenant (because it was given through Moses), the Sinaitic covenant (because the Ten Commandments were given at Mount Sinai) and the covenant of law (because it is based on man's keeping of the law). On the other hand, the new covenant of Jesus, which is the covenant that we live by today, is also known as the covenant of grace (because it is based on God's undeserved, unearned and unmerited favor) and the covenant of peace (because it expresses the shalom of Jesus).

The Major Difference Between The Old And New Covenants

Let me give you a scripture that shows clearly the difference between the old and new covenants:

FOR THE LAW WAS GIVEN THROUGH MOSES, BUT GRACE [UNMERITED FAVOR] AND TRUTH CAME THROUGH JESUS (CHRIST. (JOHN 1:17)

Notice that truth is on the same side as God's unmerited favor and both grace (unmerited favor) and truth came through Jesus Christ. When I did a study of this verse in its original Greek, I found out that "grace and truth" are actually referred to as a singular unit, since they are followed by the singular verb "came." In other words, in God's eyes, grace and truth are synonymous-unmerited favor is truth and truth is unmerited favor.

Sometimes, people tell me things like, "Well, it's good that you preach grace, but we also have to tell people about truth." This makes it seem as though grace and truth are two different things when in fact, they are one and the same. You cannot separate truth from grace and grace from truth as they are both embodied in the person of Jesus Christ. In fact, just a few verses before this, John 1:14, referring to the person of Jesus, says, "And the Word became flesh 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." Grace and truth came together through the person and ministry of Jesus. Grace is not a doctrine or teaching. Grace is a Person.

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This is contrasted with the old covenant of law that was given through Moses on Mount Sinai. We can see that God is very precise in dealing with the two covenants and does not mix them together. Grace is grace and law is law. Grace came by Jesus whereas the law was given through Moses. Jesus

didn't come to give us more laws. He came to give us His unmerited favor, which is His truth! It would be of immense profit to you to keep in mind that every time you read the word "grace" in the Bible, you translate it mentally as "unmerited favor," because that is what it is.

The Abrahamic Covenant Of Grace

Many years ago, when I was studying God's Word, the Lord spoke to me, saying, "Before the law was given, none of the children of Israel died when they came out of Egypt. Even though they murmured and complained against God's appointed leadership, not a single one of them died. This is a picture of pure grace." I had never heard anyone teach this before or read it in any book, so I quickly went through that portion in my Bible and indeed, I could not find anyone who died before the law was given!

God had delivered the children of Israel from a lifetime of slavery by performing great signs and wonders. But when they found themselves caught between the Red Sea and the advancing Egyptian army, they complained to Moses, saying, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt?" (Exodus 14:11) What audacity! And yet, did God punish those who murmured? No, in fact, He saved the Israelites spectacularly, opening up the Red Sea for them to escape from their pursuers who were closing in on them.

Before the law was given, none of the children of Israel died even though they murmured and complained against God's appointed leadership. This is a picture of pure grace.

After they had crossed over to the other side of the Red Sea, they continued to murmur over and over again, in spite of God's miraculous provisions and gracious protection. At a place called Marah, they complained that the waters were bitter and God made the waters sweet and refreshing for them. (Exodus 15:23-25) Then, when they had no food, they grumbled to Moses again, saying, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger. (Exodus 16:3) Their ungrateful diatribes were directed not only at Moses, but also at God. So did God rain fire and brimstone on them? No! He rained bread from heaven to feed them! It was as if every fresh murmuring brought forth fresh demonstrations of God's goodness!

Do you know why?

It is because all these events occurred before the Ten Commandments were given. You see, before the law was given, the children of Israel lived under

grace (unmerited favor), and all the blessings and provisions that they received were dependent on God's goodness and not their obedience. The Lord delivered them out of Egypt not because of their goodness or good behavior. He brought them out by the blood of the lamb (a picture of the blood of the Lamb of God) that was applied on their doorposts on the night of the first Passover.

The children of Israel were dependent upon God's faithfulness to the Abrahamic covenant, which was a covenant based on His grace (unmerited favor). Abraham lived more than 400 years before the law was given, long before there were the Ten Commandments. God had related to Abraham based on Abraham's faith in His grace and not based on Abraham's obedience to the law. God's Word makes it clear that Abraham was not justified by the law: "For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.'" (Romans 4:2-3) How was Abraham made righteous? He believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness!

The good news for you and me is this: Today, we are under the new covenant of grace (unmerited favor), and God's unmerited favor is upon us. His blessings and His provisions for us are based entirely on HIS GOODNESS and HIS FAITHFULNESS. Hallelujah! When the Israelites journeyed from Egypt to Mount Sinai, they were under the Abrahamic covenant of grace. Therefore, in spite of their sins, God delivered them out of Egypt and provided for them supernaturally, not based on their goodness and faithfulness, but based on His goodness and faithfulness. How cool is that?

The Exchange Of Covenants

God's desire was to have a relationship with the children of Israel. When they arrived at Mount Sinai, God told Moses to tell them this: "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people . . . And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Exodus 19:4-6) When God said this, it was with tenderness in His voice as He recounted how He had brought them to Himself so that He could forge a special relationship with them.

However, the tragedy of all tragedies occurred for the children of Israel when they responded to God after hearing this at the foot of Mount Sinai. They were proud and did not want the relationship God had envisioned. They wanted to deal with God at arm's length, through impersonal commandments. They

seemed to have forgotten that it was God's unmerited favor that had brought them out of Egypt, that it was His unmerited favor that had opened a way for them when there was no way, and that it was His unmerited favor that had given them manna from heaven.

Now, they wanted to exchange the covenant of grace that they had been under for a different kind of covenant. When Moses told them what God had said, they responded arrogantly (which can be seen from the Hebrew syntax), saying in essence, "All that God commands us, we are well able to perform!" (Exodus 19:8) In other words, this is what they said to God, "God, don't judge us and bless us anymore based on Your goodness and faithfulness. Assess us based on our merits. Bless us based on our obedience because we are well able to perform whatever You demand of us!"

From that moment onwards, God immediately changed His tone with the children of Israel. He distanced Himself from them and told Moses to command the people not to go near Mount Sinai for the mountain was holy. What happened? Once God's grace was rejected, and the people presumed upon their own righteousness and obedience to respond to Him, God drew back from them. Look at the tone that He used on the Israelites after they chose to come under the covenant of law: "Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud ...Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. Not a hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot with an arrow..." (Exodus 19:9-13)

What a change! The Lord's presence had been with them every step of the way in the pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. He had brought them through the Red Sea and provided for their every need. He was good to them because of His faithfulness to the Abrahamic covenant based on His grace (unmerited favor). But now, He warned the children of Israel to keep away from His presence! He could no longer deal with them in the same way after they had elected to come under a different covenant in their dealings with Him—one that was based on their performance and obedience, not on His goodness as before.

In fact, in the beginning of the very next chapter after the Israelites had told God to judge them based on their performance, God gave them the Ten Commandments and the covenant of law was introduced. But were the Israelites able to live up to their boasting that they could perform all that God commanded them to do? Absolutely not! Right at the foot of Mount Sinai, they created a golden calf out of the very gold that God had given them and worshipped it as the god who had brought them out of the land of Egypt!

The more you try to keep the law by your efforts, the more it will bring

forth what it was designed to bring forth-your failings and sins.

Immediately, once they presumed upon their ability to keep God's commandments, they broke the very first commandment: "You shall have no other gods before Me." (Exodus 20:3) Why did they commit such a terrible act? The apostle Paul tells us that "the strength of sin is the law." (1 Corinthians 15:56) The more you try to keep the law by your efforts, the more it will bring forth what it was designed to bring forth-your failings and sins. And this will happen until it brings you to the end of yourself, until you realize that you cannot meet God's perfect standards on your own and you cast yourself totally upon His grace (unmerited favor) and goodness.

After they had exchanged covenants, God's response to the children of Israel when they murmured changed. In Numbers 21:5, the Bible records that they complained, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread." This sounds like one of the complaints that they made earlier, doesn't it? But look what happened this time: "So the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died." (Numbers 21:6)

Now, I want to point out that God did not create the serpents to bite the people after they had murmured-the serpents were there in the wilderness all the time. God simply lifted His hand of protection over them and allowed the serpents to move in on them. We see that now, when the Israelites murmured, they died! Why did God respond so differently to the same sin of murmuring? It was because He was now operating under a different covenant with them. The Israelites had exchanged the Abrahamic covenant, which was based on God's grace (undeserved favor), for the Mosaic covenant, which was based on their performance. Protection was contingent on their ability to keep the law perfectly. But thank God we are no longer under the old covenant. Because of the cross, God will not lift His hand of protection over us.

The Terms Of The Old Covenant

In Deuteronomy 28, there is a beautiful passage that records the wonderful blessings from God that affect every area of our lives, including our families, careers and finances. Let's look at some of these blessings:

BLESSED SHALL YOU BE IN THE CITY, AND BLESSED SHALL YOU BE IN THE COUNTRY. BLESSED SHALL BE THE FRUIT OF YOUR BODY, THE PRODUCE OF YOUR GROUND AND THE INCREASE OF YOUR HERDS, THE INCREASE OF YOUR CATTLE AND THE OFFSPRING OF YOUR FLOCKS . . .THE LORD WILL OPEN TO YOU HIS GOOD TREASURE, THE HEAVENS, TO GIVE THE RAIN TO YOUR LAND

IN ITS SEASON, AND TO BLESS ALL THE WORK OF YOUR HAND. YOU SHALL LEND TO MANY NATIONS, BUT YOU SHALL NOT BORROW. (DEUTERONOMY 28:3-4, AND 12)

These were blessings that were promised under the old covenant of law. But how would these blessings come upon you if you were under the old covenant?

God answered this question when He said, "And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail ...if you heed the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them. So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right or the left, to go after other gods to serve them." (Deuteronomy 28:13-14) The key operative word to access God's blessings under the old covenant is one big "IF"-IF you can keep God's commandments perfectly, then you can enjoy His blessings! Is this a good deal? This basically means that the old covenant of law was entirely contingent on your works and ability to keep God's commandments impeccably. Only then could you be blessed!

But what happens IF you fail to keep God's commandments perfectly? Under this old covenant of law, the Lord said:

BUT IT SHALL COME TO PASS, IF YOU DO NOT OBEY THE VOICE OF THE LORD YOUR GOD, TO OBSERVE CAREFULLY ALL HIS COMMANDMENTS AND HIS STATUTES WHICH I COMMAND YOU TODAY, THAT ALL THESE CURSES WILL COME UPON YOU AND OVERTAKE YOU: (CURSED SHALL YOU BE IN THE CITY, AND CURSED SHALL YOU BE IN THE COUNTRY . . . (CURSED SHALL BE THE FRUIT OF YOUR BODY AND THE PRODUCE OF YOUR LAND, THE INCREASE OF YOUR CATTLE AND THE OFFSPRING OF YOUR FLOCKS ...THE LORD WILL SEND ON YOU CURSING, CONFUSION, AND REBUKE IN ALL THAT YOU SET YOUR HAND TO DO, UNTIL YOU ARE DESTROYED AND UNTIL YOU PERISH QUICKLY, BECAUSE OF THE WICKEDNESS OF YOUR DOINGS IN WHICH YOU HAVE FORSAKEN ME. (DEUTERONOMY 28:15-16, 18, AND 20)

Wow, this is heavy stuff! If you were offered the choice to go back under the old covenant of law today, would you?

Under the old covenant, you would be blessed if you kept God's law perfectly, but you would also attract horrific curses when you failed! Why do you think that God found fault with this covenant? The old covenant of law was not His best for the children of Israel. They asked for it when they boasted in their ability to be blessed based on their own works. They rejected His unmerited favor. They rejected the Abrahamic covenant and declared that they wanted to be evaluated based on their own goodness rather than His goodness.

God wanted to bless His people based on His unmerited favor, but because

they wanted to be blessed based on their own law-keeping, He had to humble their self-consuming arrogance. He showed them His perfect standards that no man could ever maintain-He gave them the old covenant of law.

The Law As A Shadow Of Good Things To Come

How do we know that the covenant of law was not God's best? Well, if that covenant was good enough, God would not have had to send Jesus to die on the cross for us. But look at what God did-He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to fulfill the law perfectly on our behalf at the cross. Jesus, who knew no sin, took upon His own body all the curses and the full payment for all the sins of humanity, so that under this new covenant through Him we can completely depend on His unmerited favor for every blessing in our lives. My friend, the unmerited favor that we enjoy today through Jesus under the new covenant is God's best for us!

To prove to you that Jesus (and not the law) is God's best, do you know that God had already concealed shadows pointing to Jesus' sacrifice on the cross in the very same chapter that the Ten Commandments were given?

Let me show you something about reading and understanding the Old Testament. The Old Testament is full of shadows, types and pictures that point to the person of Jesus and His death on the cross. Paul explains this in the Book of Hebrews when he speaks of the law as "having a shadow of the good things to come." (Hebrews 10:1)

When you see the shadow of an object, you know that the object is nearby. Knowing that the law is a shadow of "good things to come," we need to find out what "the good things to come" refers to. Paul answers this question for us when he talks about how the rituals under the law "are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ." (Colossians 2:17) The shadows hidden in the Old Testament point to the substance in the New Testament, which is Jesus Christ! Would eating the shadow of a hamburger satisfy you? No, you need to partake of the actual substance to be filled!

*Jesus is in the old covenant concealed and in the new covenant revealed.
He is the key to unlocking the Old Testament.*

Now, let's get back to what we were talking about earlier. Do you know that even as God gave the Ten Commandments, Jesus was on His mind? God was already preparing to send His Son to die for you and me! Jesus is in the old covenant concealed and in the new covenant revealed. He is the key to unlocking the Old Testament, and that makes unveiling every detail that is recorded in the Bible so exciting. My ministry is all about unveiling the person of Jesus and what I am about to share with you really gets my spiritual hormones bubbling.

Are you ready? Let's look at Exodus 20 again, where the Ten Commandments were given. We can see that even when God was giving the law, Jesus' death on the cross was already on His mind. He knew that the people could not keep the law, so He made provision for the cross as the answer to the people's failure. God's immediate instruction to Moses after the law was given was to build Him an altar. What is an altar? An altar is a place where offerings were sacrificed. Right here you see a shadow of the cross of Calvary, where Jesus was sacrificed. But God didn't stop there. He gave some instructions about building the altar, which reveal even more about the cross.

In the last two verses of Exodus 20, God told Moses, "And if you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone; for if you use your tool on it, you have profaned it." (Exodus 20:25) What this instruction tells us about the cross is that there can be no human effort (no hewn stone) involved. It tells us that man's works cannot be added to the finished work of Jesus, for that would profane it. God also said, "Nor shall you go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed on it." (Exodus 20:26)

You cannot add to Jesus' sacrifice nor can you deserve His favor by depending on your obedience to the law.

My friend, man cannot gain access to God's unmerited favor by his own steps. Man's self-efforts to deserve God's favor will only expose his own weaknesses. Favor comes only from Jesus' work on the cross. You cannot add to His work nor can you deserve His favor by depending on your obedience to the law. Jesus did a complete work on the cross and declared that "It is finished!" (John 19:30) Now, isn't it exhilarating to see Jesus unveiled in the Old Testament?

But I am not done yet. I have only mentioned the altar. What about the offerings? I am not going to go into every detail about the offerings in this book. However, suffice it to say that God told the children of Israel to sacrifice offerings to Him. These offerings are found in the Book of Leviticus, which gives a detailed account of the burnt offering, peace offering, meal offering, sin offering, and trespass offering.

"Pastor Prince, why are there so many types of offerings and why is this important to me?"

Because, all five offerings are shadows that point to our one perfect offering- Jesus Christ on the cross. That one sacrifice of Jesus is so rich with truths that it takes five offerings to depict His one offering on the cross.

So you see, my friend, even as God gave the Ten Commandments, His heart was already set on sending Jesus as the final sacrifice to redeem man from his failings. He knew from the very beginning of the covenant of law that man

would fail him and that no man could ever keep the law fully and be blessed. And that is why in His love for man, He made a provision for the offerings even as He gave the law. God wanted to ensure that there was a way out for His people so that when they failed to keep His laws, they could bring their offerings to Him before the curses could come upon them. Hallelujah! How can we not love Him?



The priest examines the lamb to see if it is perfect.

Beloved, you will find that even the process that the Israelites followed when they made their offerings is full of truths. God doesn't tell us everything plainly, for "It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter." (Proverbs 25:2) However, because you are reading this book today, you are about to see more beautiful shadows of what happened at Calvary. For example, when a sinner brings his offering to the priest, the lamb that he brings must be without spot, wrinkle or blemish. After the priest has examined the lamb, the sinner must lay his hands upon the

lamb's head. The sinner then kills the lamb and offers it upon the altar as a sacrifice.

"Why can't the sinner just bring any lamb to the priest?"

The lamb must be perfect because it is a picture of Jesus' perfection- He is our perfect sacrifice, without any spot, wrinkle or blemish of sin!

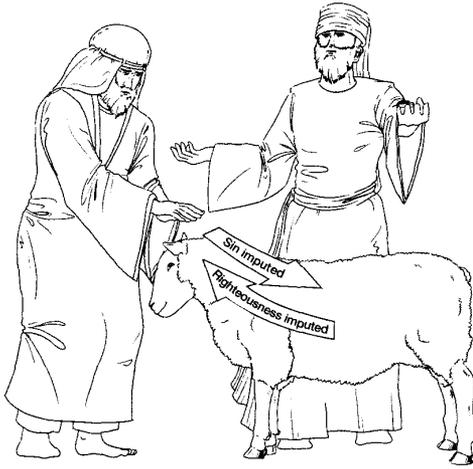
"What has a sinner laying his hands on a lamb got to do with us today?"

This act has dual significance: The sinner is transferring his sins to the innocent lamb, while the lamb's innocence is transferred to the sinner. The sinner is now made righteous and walks away free from any curse. It has everything to do with us because this is an amazing picture of the divine exchange that took place on the cross. At the cross, all our sins were put upon Jesus, the Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world. But Jesus did not only take away our sins. He also transferred His righteousness to us, so that today, you and I can be forever redeemed from the curse of the law!

"Why did the lamb have to be killed?"

For the sacrifice to be complete, the lamb has to be killed. Now, the man who brought the offering can walk away with the righteousness of the lamb.

Instead of the curses that he deserves, he can now expect God's blessings.



Jesus' one perfect payment cleared your lifetime of sins and now you walk in newness of life with the righteousness of the Lamb of God! You can now live life with a confident expectation of God's blessings coming upon you. What a life!

Beloved, Jesus had to die an agonizing death because "the wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23) He did not just take away your sins and give you His righteousness. He also took upon His own body the punishment for your sins. Once you accept Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, you are no longer a sinner. All your sins-past, present and future-have

The sinner transfers his sins to the innocent lamb, while the lamb's innocence is transferred to the sinner.

been punished at the cross once and for all. Jesus does not need to be crucified ever again. His one perfect payment cleared your lifetime of sins! Today, you can enjoy all the blessings of the new covenant because of what Jesus has done for you. You are now under the covenant of His unmerited favor and all the terms to be met for you to be blessed have been met by Jesus!

The lamb suffers the judgment of God. The offerer walks away under the blessings of God.



REMIND NO CLASS ON NOVEMBER 27 and December 11. CLASS WILL RESUME ON December 18.