

November 20, 2016—Fall Quarter 2016—Sunday Morning Bible Class

UNMERITED
FAVOR

Your supernatural advantage for a successful life

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Covenanted To Succeed in Life

This chapter could possibly be one of the most pivotal and crucial chapters in this book. I believe that if you take time to understand what the Lord has put in my heart 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 resource 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!

Sounds 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.

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By calling this covenant "new," He has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.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 in your Bible carefully. It is not Joseph Prince who said that the old covenant is redundant. I am just reiterating 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

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 8:7-9 TLB)

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.

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. (1 Samuel 13:14, Acts 13:22) 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?

**UNDER THE LAW, EVEN THE BEST FAILED.
UNDER GRACE, EVEN THE WORST CAN BE SAVED!**

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!

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 Pastor Prince, we should not be looking at benefits when we believe in Jesus."

I am glad that you brought up this point. 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 lovingkindness and tender mercies, who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." (Psalms 103:1-5)

Beloved, 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.

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!"

WHAT WE NEED IS A GREATER REVELATION AND APPRECIATION OF JESUS AND EVERYTHING THAT HE HAS DONE FOR US!

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.

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 any more. Find out all about your covenant rights in Christ today!

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.

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.

"Pastor Prince, isn't this old and new covenants business just for Bible school students? How is this relevant to me?"

Hang on for a second here. Before you throw your hands up

and give up, let me 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!

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, 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.

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) 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.

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. (Matthew 8:16-17)

Today, all the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled in your life through Jesus!

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!

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 ..."

My friend, 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.

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.

THE LAW IS DESIGNED TO EXPOSE ALL YOUR DEFICIENCIES, BUT GRACE (UNMERITED FAVOR) POINTS YOU TO YOUR SUFFICIENCY IN CHRIST.

You see, my friend, 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 13:5)

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.

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.

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."

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."

Essentially, 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!

PRAYER:

Dear Father, I thank You that I am not under the old covenant of law today, where even the best of us will fail, but I am under the

new covenant of Your unmerited favor. Thank You for putting me under this new covenant where I don't have to work to earn Your blessings and favor. Instead, I can simply rest, knowing that I have Your blessings, approval and favor because Jesus secured them for me by His sacrifice at the cross. Today, I rest in Your unmerited favor for every success. Father I thank You that You forgive all my iniquities and heal all my diseases. Thank You for redeeming my life from destruction, crowning me with lovingkindness and tender mercies, and satisfying my mouth with good things, so that my youth is renewed like the eagle's. Help me remember all these benefits every day, and show me more of Jesus, His finished work and my covenant rights in Him. The law condemns (punishes) me at my best. Grace saves me at my worst and gives me Your unmerited favor for my peace, wholeness (health) and success in Jesus' Name. Amen.

REMIND NO CLASS ON NOVEMBER 27, 2016.

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RESUME CLASS ON DECEMBER 4, 2016