

Feb. 3/08 Esther 4:15-17; 5:1-2 Lk. 4:14-21 Dare To Ask For Favour

A Baptist minister received a visitor one day who had an unusual request. He said, "Reverend, my dog is very sick and I'm worried. Would you be prepared to have a little service at the church for my dog, to pray for his healing and say a blessing over him?" The Baptist minister thought this sounded very flaky and he said, "We do not offer this kind of service in our church. There is a church down the road of a denomination that does that sort of thing." The man thanked the minister for his information, and said, "Do you think a donation of five thousand dollars would be sufficient for that church in appreciation of this service?" Immediately, the Baptist minister put his arm around the man's shoulder and said, "Why didn't you tell me your dog was a Baptist?"

We see that at first, the minister was not favorably disposed to grant the man's request. However, when he got a whiff of money, the minister became favorably disposed toward the man to do all he could for him. Isn't it great that God is not like that in his dealings with us, ever shifting in His positions, vacillating all the time? The Bible assures us that God is the same all the time. "I am the Lord. I change not." "Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever." Not only is God the changeless one, but He is favorably disposed toward to help us in our time of need. As Heb. 4:16 reminds us, "Let us come with boldness to the throne of our gracious God. Then we will receive His mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it." NLT Grace is God's FREE UNMERITED FAVOUR. We know He has promised to show us grace and favour, but asking is the key. Do we dare to ask for favour?

I/ GOD WANTS TO SHOW US FAVOUR: WHAT IS IT?

Favour is a word which appears 56 times in the Old Testament King James Version. I checked it out in Vine's Dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words and here is what it said.

A. FAVOUR IS A NOUN

1. It refers to "What a king can or will do for some one he likes."
2. "The position one enjoys before a superior who is favorably disposed toward him." For example, the angel Gabriel addressed Mary as "highly favored one." Lk. 1:28 Did you know we are all "highly favored ones" in the sight of God? That's right. Eph. 1:3, 6 makes the following commentary on the favour God has shown us in Christ. "We praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we belong to Christ." "We praise God for the wonderful kindness He poured out on us because we belong to His dearly beloved Son."
3. "God feels well disposed toward the petitioner." Ps. 37:4 gives us a wonderful promise in this regard. "Take delight in the Lord and He will give you your heart's desires." Here are some examples.

A. JOSEPH He was sold into slavery by his brothers and falsely accused of wrongdoing by his master who imprisoned him. But God showed Joseph favour in

the jail. Joseph was basically put in charge of running the place. And when a time of opportunity came, God gave Joseph favour with Pharaoh, in so much favour that he was promoted to the position of prime minister of Egypt.

B. ESTHER Right from the beginning, God showed great favour toward Esther. “Hegai (the servant in charge of the harem) was very impressed with Esther and he treated her kindly....He assigned her seven maids specially chosen for her from the king’s palace, and he moved her and her maids into the BEST PLACE in the harem.” Es. 2:9 When informed of the threat to her people, Esther mobilized prayer so that she would find favour with the king. See Es. 4:15-16 The law decreed that anyone coming into the king’s presence without a personal invitation must die unless the king extended the golden scepter of his favour toward them, symbolizing the royal welcome. Esther did find favour with the king and ended up becoming queen of Persia. She found so much favour with the king that he was willing to do virtually anything she asked, and thus was used of God for the deliverance of her people.

C. DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS These young men found great favour in Babylon and were groomed for high office. Even when threatened by death in a fiery furnace for holding true to their faith, God turned the situation around to give them favour with the king. When Daniel was later thrown in a lion’s den through the scheming of the king’s advisers, God turned it around to give him increasing favour with the king. See Dan. 2:48-49; 3:30 Chapter six

B. FAVOUR IS A VERB

1. “To be pleased or delighted with.” (As the king was with Esther)
2. “Pleased to make friends with” (As the king was with Daniel)
3. “Graciously disposed” (As Pharaoh was toward Joseph)

II/ MY PERSONAL TESTIMONY OF THE FAVOUR OF GOD

I am overwhelmed when I think of how the favour of God has worked in my own life.

A., EDUCATION I spent nine years training for the ministry. During that time, God opened doors for financial supply and guided me all the way to completion. I was blessed not to have a staggering load of debt when I graduated.

B. MINISTRY I came to my church as a green around the gills young minister, and God gave me great favour with the people.

C. BLESSED BY OTHERS This past summer when my wife and I considered a spot for a vacation, an old friend of her’s offered his cottage on the bay of Fundy at a mere pittance. That is just one example of how God has showed us favour through the friendship of others.

D. EVERY DAY WAYS Here are just two examples. Some time ago, I was in the grocery store and the lineups were huge. I had never seen them so long. I thought I

would be there for an hour. Then right beside me a cashier opened up her line, and I was the second person in the line. Now you may think that is just coincidence, but I prefer to believe that if things like that happen repeatedly, it is the hand of God. "He lays His hand of blessing on my head." Ps. 139:5 Then there is parking. There are times my wife and I go to parking lots, and she will say, "We will never find a spot." I'll respond by saying, "Favour!" And sure enough, God always provides us with a spot.

Friend, don't make the mistake of thinking these things only happen to the likes of ministers. If you are a Christian, there are very likely many ways the favour of God is coming toward you. You just might not be recognizing it as that. Or you might not be daring to ask God to show you favour. You've got to be on the lookout for His favour operating in your life.

III/ SPECIAL TIMES OF FAVOUR

The New Testament uses two different words for time; *chronos* which refers to chronological time unfolding day by day, and *kairos* which refers to special times when God is showing favour in a mighty way. "At just the right time, I will respond to you. On the day of salvation I will help you." Is. 49:8 When Jesus read Scripture in the synagogue, He read the passage from Is. 61. "The time of the Lord's favour has come." 61:2 Over the years, our church has certainly been a recipient of the favour of God.

A. BEGINNINGS While it is certainly true that our church was able to be built through the creative ministry of Dr. Freeman Fenerty, it is also true that God gave us great favour in the eyes of others and caused the funds to flow in from unexpected quarters.

B. SHORTFALL Only a few years after I began ministry at the church, we were really financially struggling. We did not know how we could continue to pay the bills. The idea of going with a part time student pastor was also briefly considered. Then one day, a couple came to visit me. They told me they wished to make a ten thousand dollar donation to the church, no strings attached. (At that time, we were having a prayer vigil for our church.) That ten thousand dollar donation broke something in the spiritual realm. The financial situation began to improve from then on, and we went on to be able to burn the mortgage on the parsonage and a small amount remaining on the church's mortgage was paid off as well. God also favored us with the ability to become a Plus giving church, which means for many years, we have tried to give over ten per cent of our budget to the United in Missions fund in our Atlantic Baptist Convention.

C. RENOVATIONS NEEDED Some years later, our church desperately needed renovations, e.g a new roof, new windows and new siding. The parsonage did as well. We wondered where the money would come from. We worried and we stressed. That is except for one man who knew what God was doing. That man all the while was involved with the settlement of an estate which ultimately made a great deal of money available to our church to complete the renovations.

D. FAVOUR IN THE COMMUNITY There was an elderly gentleman I used to visit. He was not a churchgoer. But as a result of the church making a connection with him, when he died he had designated three thousand dollars of his estate for our church.

These wonderful examples of God's favour lead me to the following conclusions.

1. We should ask God to show us favour in our need. Heb. 4:16 Ps. 119:58
2. God will indeed show favour to those who dare to ask for favour.
3. Dare to ask for favour, because your King is the King of kings, and He is holding out the golden sceptre of His favour toward you right now. Will you accept it?

IV/ YOUR KING IS HOLDING OUT THE GOLDEN SCEPTRE OF HIS FAVOUR: DARE TO ASK FOR FAVOUR

Jesus declared, "The time of the Lord's favour has come." Lk. 4:19 He meant that He had come to fulfill and express the favour of God toward us. The favour He extends includes an offer of:

- A. Comfort for the comfortless.
- B. Freedom from addictive, enslaving sins.
- C. Blessing instead of curses.
- D. Beauty for your ashes.
- E. Joy instead of mourning.
- F. Praise instead of despair.

There is a condition for finding favour with the king as Esther discovered. You have to ask for it. David prayed for favour in his own life as king of Israel, knowing he could not possibly be a good king without the favour of God. "With all my heart I want your blessings. Be merciful just as you have promised." Ps. 119:58 Be careful of what I call the favour blockers. These include:

1. Skepticism What good will my prayers do? "My prayers wouldn't accomplish a whole lot."
2. Unbelief James says, "You do not have because you do not ask."
3. Low Expectancy Many Christians are so discouraged and jaded that they do not really expect to see the miraculous occur in their lives. My goodness! After the stories I have shared from my own life and church, our attitude should be, "How can we not win? What wonderful thing is the Lord going to do next?"

So dare to ask for favour, because your King is holding out the golden scepter of His favour and your King desires to show you His favour if you will dare to approach and draw near to Him.