

The Greatest Story (Part 28):

The Favor of the Lord

Isaiah 61

Memory Verses: Psalm 30:5

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

End of the school year awards programs are the worst. You sit there for 5 hours and maybe your kid gets a cheap 30 cent medal to showcase that they got straight C's in P.E. Of course, that's not my kids. My kids are the best and brightest... we had to hire a moving company this year to bring home all their bling. Here's some of it right here. But that wasn't me. I remember being in 4th grade sitting in an auditorium for what seemed like forever watching all of my classmates get up several times to go get pins and medals and certificates and plaques and trophies and have confetti fall on their heads and be carried off the stage on the shoulders of their peers like Rudy all while I never got up once. It was clear who was favored and who wasn't.

You ever feel that way: Like everyone around you is favored while you are rejected? That they get all the accolades, rewards, prestige, and popularity while you get neglected and forgotten. Like everything everyone else touches turns to gold while everything you touch turns to ash? Not trying to be too bleak here but you know what I mean... we've all been there right? We've all felt that favor was out of reach.

Well, let's put ourselves in the shoes of Judah & Israel in the time of Isaiah. Isaiah begins his ministry during the reign of Uzziah and prophecies for 50 years to the kings of Judah; Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Manasseh, the last of which had him sawn in half. During his ministry he foresees and witnesses the banishment and captivity of Israel under the Assyrian empire in 722 B.C. After which he foresees the banishment and captivity of Judah under the Babylonian empire in 597 B.C. Because this is over 100 years after his actual ministry Isaiah does not witness this event but prophecies of it, warns of it, and counsels Judah and its kings to turn from their wicked idolatry as to escape the coming wrath. Not to mention that Judah is only a portion of what it once was. Where as it was once one of the largest kingdoms on Earth it is now a small kingdom dependent upon alliances to keep what little power it has. The people are poor, sick, starving, and defeated in spirit. To say that they feel a lack of favor would be an understatement.

And yet, Isaiah's prominent message for 50 years is that the Lord is good and His favor is coming. You've been sitting there for hundreds of years waiting to be carried on the shoulders of the other nations, to

return to the glory of Solomon's kingdom, to take your place as the prominent nation in all the world instead of being sold into slavery for another 70 years. And unbeknownst to you but you will endure another 400 years of silence... but after which the favor of the Lord is going to come!

Psalm 30:5 promises us that; "for his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning."

The question for Judah was... can you trust in the Lord and patiently wait for the year of the Lord's favor? And the question for us is similar; can we see and embrace the favor of the Lord in lieu of the pursuit of all other favor? Cause here is the truth that we find in our passage this morning *Isaiah 61*; The favor of the Lord dwarfs all other favor and it is readily available for you today. **No Favor is More Favorable Than the Favor of the Lord.**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

So let's go ahead and start reading in *Isaiah 61 verse one*. The first thing we see here is that the **The Favor of The Lord Is The Anointing of the Spirit (vs.1a)**. Once again we are dealing with prophetic literature here. In prophetic biblical books there are often multiple contexts to which the prophecy can apply. Here we have three. The first perspective would be that of Isaiah within the context of the kingdom of Judah. Here Isaiah is proclaiming his anointing as a prophet of God to tell of the future favor of God upon the Israelites. The second perspective which we will focus the majority of our attention on is for us as Christians. We as believers are anointed by God as prophets through the baptism of the Spirit, and one of the greatest ways in which we are shown the favor of God is through the blessings of the Holy Spirit. The Word tells us of hundreds of benefits of being anointed with the Holy Spirit but the primary is simply as a helper. *John 16:7* says that Jesus is sending us the Spirit to help us. How does the Holy Spirit help us as believers? He sanctifies us in *1 Cor 6:11*. He helps set us apart from the world and set us apart for Christ. In the same way *2 Cor 3:18* tells us that he transforms us. By the power of the Holy Spirit we are not the same today as we were yesterday. We are being made more into the likeness of Christ through the Spirit. *Acts 8:29* tells us that he is guiding us to move where God is moving and to act as God would have us to act. In *1 Cor 12:4-11* we see that Holy Spirit gifts us with many gifts in order to be effective followers of Christ. In *John 14:26* we see that the Spirit actually teaches us in various ways. In *Romans 8:26* we see that Holy Spirit directs our prayers and helps us find the words to say when we can't find the right way to say them. And in *Acts 1:8* we know that the Spirit empowers us to be the voice of God and evangelize the world. We would be very ineffective without the Holy Spirit and we can clearly see the favor of God upon us by giving us such a gift. As the Holy Spirit helps us and guides us

we now have a purpose and the means to execute that purpose. It's funny how we picture favor... we think of the rich being favored or the famous being favored but many of them living as though that's not enough. Why? Because they don't have the direction of Holy Spirit. You see... **The rich may remain directionless, the powerful may remain depressed yet we have the help of the Holy Spirit directing our every path**. And that's why we say that **No Favor is More Favorable Than the Favor of the Lord**.

Next, as we read **verses 1b-7** we see that ... **The Favor of The Lord Is Experiencing & Preaching Satisfaction in God (vs.1b-7)**. For us as believers there are two aspects here. First we experience full satisfaction in God and then we preach that there is no satisfaction in this world like being satisfied in God. Let's first look at our experience.

To be favored is to experience the satisfaction of the Lord. First we experience good news (**vs1**). Though we may be poor physically, the good news of God makes us rich in spirit. Secondly, we see that though we may experience heartache and pain in this life, God heals broken hearts (**vs1**). Thirdly, we experience freedom from captivity. For those of us who follow Christ we have no doubt been set free from sin (**vs1**). As we move on we see that God blesses us with comfort in morning (**vs2-3**), beauty for ashes (**vs3**), gladness instead of mourning (**vs3**), worship instead of depression (**vs3**) and an imputed righteousness for God's glory (**vs3**). Through his favor we can rebuild what was torn down (**vs4**) and experience physical & spiritual prosperity (**vs5**). And then we see that we are considered priests and ministers of the Lord (**vs6**) and will experience a double portion instead of shame (**vs7**). Ultimately in God we are wholly satisfied with everlasting joy for all eternity (**vs7**). Wow... that is favor. The question would be... how can one not be satisfied in a God who gives such favor. John Piper famously says - **"God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him."** It is God's desire that you would be satisfied in him and in nothing else. **No Favor is More Favorable Than the Favor of the Lord**. But we also must observe the second aspect here... **As followers of God we must not only enjoy his blessings but we must preach his blessings to those who do not know him**. So... We must preach his good news – the Gospel. We must preach his ability to heal hearts. We must preach his ability to set free from sin and all things that hinder us. We must preach his ability to comfort us when we are devastated. We must preach his righteousness imputed to each of us, which without we could not be saved. We must preach his restoration when we repent. We must preach our responsibility as his priests and ministers. And we must preach heaven and the everlasting joy of God. In his book; "Don't Waste Your Life" Piper makes the point that not only do we bring God the most glory by being satisfied in him but by also

seeking that same satisfaction for others. He put it like this; **"The greatest cause in the world is joyfully rescuing people from hell, meeting their earthly needs, making them glad in God, and doing it with a kind, serious pleasure that makes Christ look like the Treasure he is."**

Lastly we see here in **verses 8-11**... **The Favor of The Lord Is An Everlasting and Undeserved Covenant (vs.8-11)**. Here we see that our God must be just, he must give a just recompense for sin or for righteousness. Unfortunately we are all unrighteous and fall short of the glory of God. So... he has made a way through a covenant. A covenant that he alone upholds. An unbreakable and undeserved salvation done fully through the work of God and not of ourselves. In this covenant we, sinful disobedient and rebellious people can become the adopted children of God. **Ep 1:4-5**. In this he has made us righteous. And we even see the imagery here of a wedding symbolizing his unbreakable covenant with his church. No one loves the church like God does and **No Favor is More Favorable Than the Favor of the Lord**.

Application (Resolution, You)

The bottom line is... you are favored by God! As a believer you are highly favored by the Lord. If you are anointed by the Holy Spirit, if you are wholly satisfied by the spiritual blessings of God, if you are under the everlasting covenant of God then you are favored out of your socks!!!! So get this... no matter how unfavored you may feel in this life you are favored by your Father. And we realize that the struggles, trials, unfavorable situations of this life exist to make you long for the favor of God. In fact the favor of God is the only thing we should long for. So... **Are you longing for the favor of this world or the favor of the Lord?**

Conclusion

If so... then let me give you the third perspective of this prophecy. You may ask how do I inherit the favor of the Lord? In **Luke 4:16-22** Jesus declares that this prophecy is ultimately about him. He is the anointed one. He is the one who ultimately binds up the broken hearted and sets free the captive. He brings the year of the favor of the Lord and he will come again on the day of the Lord's vengeance.

And look at this... after saying that this passage was about himself what did the crowd do... they tried to kill him. So the same choice exists for you today. Do you accept that Jesus is the fulfillment of the favor of God? Or Do you reject him as the messiah? The greatest favor is the favor of the Lord given through the Sacrifice of his Son Jesus Christ. Without a belief in

the death and resurrection of Christ and a repentance of sin there is no favor of God. **No Favor is More Favorable Than the Favor of the Lord.**