

Sermon: The Father's Favour

Theme: Living in the favour of God (FOG)

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Introduction

Father God has so much favour in His heart towards you and me. To know His favour, is to know His heart!

One of the most striking illustrations of the favour found in the Father's heart is portrayed in Jesus' parable about the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). Some say it would be more appropriate to call it the story of the Father's heart ... I tend to agree.

Text: Luke 15:20 (NIV)

'So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.'

Main points

1. The Father's heart

- The Father's heart is **for** His son. How do we know that? We know it by the Father's readiness to **give** (when his son asked for his inheritance) and by his readiness to **forgive**.
- The son experienced the father's favour when he received his inheritance and was given the freedom to exercise his own choices. This however, did not give him immunity to challenge or hardship. Having experienced the Father's favour will sustain us in such times. Knowing the fullness of blessing in the father's presence gave him something to return to.
- In the parable it says that the father saw the son while he was still far away (verse 20). This tells us something about our Father's heart.
- Why do you think the father saw the son while he was still far away? It must have been because he was on the lookout for his son daily with expectancy. The Father's heart is never to give up on any of us!
- The depth of the father's favour and grace is astounding. In spite of the son's arrogance and lack of respect the father still had his best interest at heart.

2. The depth of Father God's favour

- The depth of the Fathers' favour towards us is clearly seen in the gift of His Son Jesus, Who died for us. He gave His absolute best – His only Son. Not because we had impressed Him or improved ourselves, but while we were yet sinners.
- In *The Message* Romans 8:32 reads:

'If God didn't hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing himself to the worst by sending his own Son, is there anything else he wouldn't gladly and freely do for us?'

- The New International version puts it this way:

'He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?'

- From this scripture and Jesus' parable it is clear that the Father's favour goes beyond forgiveness. I call it *forgiveness plus*.

3. Forgiveness plus

- In Romans 8:32 a wonderful truth is brought into focus. Not only do we receive forgiveness through Christ but we are also graciously given all things!
- After the son expressed his repentance, it is amazing to see how quickly the father responded to bring restoration to him (verse 22). He immediately gives instruction for his son to be clothed in the best robe, to be given the family ring and to have sandals on his feet. To top it off, he announces a great feast (verse 22-24)!
- Our Father's favour stretches way beyond forgiveness to include restoration. His favour restores identity, brings authority and covering. Furthermore it results in joyful celebration!
- Favour is expressed in one's countenance (face). In the Old Testament the word *face* is sometimes translated as *favour*. Imagine what the prodigal saw in his father's face – incredible love and forgiveness.
- Have you ever had the experience of looking at the Father's face and seeing His favour towards you? I believe this is what is spoken of in Numbers 6:25-26. He makes His face shine upon us with favour. Once you have seen His expression of favour, your life will never be the same again!

4. Why some people do not experience the Father's favour (Verse 25-32)

- The reason why some people do not enjoy the Father's favour is because they are caught up in the *older brother syndrome*.
- It is often very religious people who get stuck in this place. This son's bitter bubble burst when he walked into this 'unfair' feast of favour!
- Let me explain this syndrome:
 - The older brother had it all, but enjoyed nothing of it. His focus was on working rather than enjoying what his father had already given him. He was under the wrong impression that he did not qualify to get anything from his father yet, when, in fact, the father had also given him his portion of the inheritance (verse 12). He refers to his 'obedience' and 'hard work' which seem to have gone unnoticed by his father. Oh, how tragic! Favour is not released because of slave-like work and obedience. It is released by **yielding** to the Father's love! The older son's response clearly shows that he did not

know his father's heart towards him. The father wanted a *son* not a *slave*! Sons do not slave – they serve out of love and live a life of gratitude.

- This parable illustrates that God's favour can cause offence and anger in some people, because they try to understand and rationalize it. They want to make it equal to what they feel they have earned. This is exactly what the older son did. He cited his merit and compared himself with the younger son. This brought him to the conclusion that his father's favour was not fair. He was offended with his father's favour! Favour is not fair – it is unmerited, undeserved goodwill and grace from God. Are you offended because someone, whom you deem undeserving of God's favour, received a blessing? Move your focus from others to the Father who favours you!
- When the father saw the older brother's anger, he lovingly pleaded with him. He reminded him that he always had access to his father's presence and to his inheritance (verse 31). In essence he was saying, 'Son you were so busy working that you failed to enjoy **me** and my perfect provision!' God is saying, 'Enjoy Me and take ownership of your inheritance!'
- I have made it part of my life mission to enjoy God. My life mission reads as follows:

I purpose to love and enjoy God everyday and to positively influence everyone who touches my life, with the loveliness of Jesus.

- The Father's favour is to be feasted on!

5. Father pleasers

- Those who accept God's grace and receive His favour live to please Him – not to qualify for or earn His acceptance and favour but rather as an outflow of having already received it. God pleasers do three things:
 - Love Him
 - Trust Him
 - Obey Him
- Let us live as Father pleasers!

Conclusion

- Are you a spiritual prodigal? Are you hungry and desperate for a better life? Have you wasted what God has given you and now feel that there is nothing left in His heart for you? Well, you are wrong!
- What is stopping you from coming to the Father? He is waiting for you!
- All you need to do is become tired enough of your circumstances. You were not meant to be with the pigs. It is time to 'come to your senses' as the prodigal son did (verse 17) and have a 'get up and go' mentality (verse 20).
- Get up today, humble yourself and repent – turn, come back to your Father and step into His favour. He is waiting with open arms!

- Can you identify with the 'older son' – knowing it all; having done it all; serving the Lord but not enjoying the fullness of His favour? If you are offended by God's favour on others; feel cheated; suffer from depleted joy or carry anger and disappointed, it is very likely that you are stuck in the *older brother syndrome*. Realize your position and accept that favour is not fair, but given by grace. Repent from your attitude just as the younger son did from his. Move your focus from others and yourself to fellowship with your Father. Enjoy His presence and provision. Respond to His invitation to celebrate the fullness of His favour. Step into the His embrace!
- Let the feast begin ...