

# When Favor Asks For Faith

by Carter Conlon

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**Scripture:** Ezekiel 36:22, Matthew 17:20, 2 Corinthians 1:8, Exodus 3:7, Judges 6:12, Luke 1:26, Hebrews 11:1, Psalm 27:8, 1 Thessalonians 5:16

**Topics:** "Faith and Favor", "Divine Purpose"

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## Description

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## Transcript

A message today entitled, When Favor Asks for Faith. It's a whole other perspective on faith and favor. Father, I thank you with all my heart, Lord, God for the touch of heaven this morning in this sanctuary.

I thank you, Lord, for the anointing of your Holy Spirit, for it's only by your spirit that we stand strong. It's only by your spirit that we can understand truth. It's only by your presence in us, Lord, that we can ever hope to be what you've called us to be.

Thank you, Lord, for this incredible grace that you pour out upon us, God, in spite of our struggles, our trials, our failures, yet you remain faithful and your favor, Lord, comes to us at times when we don't expect it, asking us to believe that you mean what you say. So thank you today for speaking to every heart. Thank you for the quickening of your Holy Spirit on my physical mind and body.

God, give us the grace, oh Lord, to hear this. And I thank you for it with all my heart, in Jesus' name. Ezekiel chapter 36, please, if you'll go there.

I'm going to read this passage of scripture to you as an illustration, really, of the point that the Lord would have me to make today. And please don't forget the prayer meeting on Tuesday night. As you can see, as

you can visually see this morning, God is doing something through that prayer meeting that is way beyond us.

Every time I pray, I feel as if the same way that David did when Jonathan had that arrow shot into the field and said that the arrow is beyond thee, David. In other words, the plan of God is deeper than you can understand, and God is doing more than you know. Just follow where he leads you.

May God give us the grace to recognize this moment that we're now in. May God give us the grace to follow him and to cease to come to church to be entertained, but to come to church now to get involved in the battle for the souls of men and for the glory of God in our generation. Ezekiel chapter 36, verse 22.

Verse 22, therefore say to the house of Israel, thus says the Lord, God, I do not this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for my holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. In other words, God's saying, you are set apart to be a people that would bring glory to my name everywhere you went, but you changed your focus and you ended up presenting me as deficient before the people. And so I'm not doing this because you have adequately presented who I am to your generation.

I'm doing it for my own holy name's sake. And I will sanctify my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. And the nations shall know that I am the Lord, says the Lord God, when I am hallowed in you before their eyes.

In other words, God says, I'm going to do something in you. I'm going to do something through you that's going to bring my name to reputation. It's not because of anything you've done.

We've not deserved this, but I'm going to do it because of mercy. I will take you from among the nations, verse 24, gather you out of all countries and bring you into your own land. In other words, I will gather you from every place you've ended up that you're not supposed to be.

And I'll bring you back to that place which you are supposed to possess, which is supposed to be your inheritance. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean. I will cleanse you from all of your filthiness and from all your idols.

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. In other words, I'll give you a heart that wants to hear truth and wants to walk in truth and desires to have what I long to give you.

I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and you will keep my judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers and you shall be my people and I will be your God. I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses and I will call for the grain and multiply it and bring no famine upon you.

I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations. Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations. Not for your sake do I this, says the Lord God.

Let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Thus says the Lord God, on the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will also enable you to dwell in the cities

and the ruins shall be rebuilt.

The desolate land shall be tilled instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass by. So they will say, this land that was desolate has become like the Garden of Eden and the wasted, desolate and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited. Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, the Lord, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted what was desolate.

I, the Lord, have spoken it and I will do it. Thus says the Lord God, I will also let the house of Israel inquire of me to do this for them. I will increase their men like a flock, like a flock offered as a holy sacrifice, like the flock at Jerusalem on its feast days.

So shall the ruined cities be filled with flocks of men and they shall know that I am the Lord. 2019 is the year of faith and favor. Now the typical way that faith and favor works is that we see promises.

We start to read the word of God and we see promises in the word of God. Now seeing these promises, we recognize our deficiency. We recognize, for example, let's say the Bible says, husbands love your wives as Christ loves the church and gave himself for her.

And we look at the promise and say, well, God, I am far from that where I need to be. But oh Lord, I see it in your word and you're commanding me to do this. And so God, I'm asking you, I'm asking you by faith and I'm believing by faith that as I ask you to do this, your favor will come upon me.

And that's the way typically faith and favor works. We ask him for divine favor to make the promises that we read in the Bible a reality in us. That's why you have to be in the Bible.

You'll never grow as a Christian if you're not reading your scriptures, you won't grow. You'll pursue excitement to excitement and high to high as it is spiritually speaking, but ultimately it will grow very cold and very old and very dim. You have to be in the word of God or you can't grow.

There are seasons though in history when the favor of God comes to God's people when we're least expecting it and asks us to believe that he's chosen to do something through us for his glory. Favor first, asking us for faith to believe it. God speaking to the heart, something so out of the realm of our own expectation, our own sense of ability to accomplish something.

God speaking to us and it's so preposterous in one sense that only God could be doing this. And he's saying, this is what I determined to do through you and for you. Now I'm asking you to believe.

It's almost like flipping the whole thing upside down. It's not all the time that that happens, but throughout history it does happen from time to time. Now most times this happens not because we're asking him for this moment of divine intervention, but because other people are and he has chosen us to help them.

Other people are asking, other people are crying out. Oh folks, if we had the ears to hear it today in New York City, how many people do you think go to bed crying every night? How many single mothers who don't know how they're gonna feed their children? How many fathers are tired of yelling and abusing their families? How many people are hopelessly addicted on either hard drugs or opiates or addicted sexually or addicted in their mind and it's destroying the quality of their life and they're calling out, they're crying out. They don't know that there is a God.

There's a sigh and a sobbing. It's every day, it's all day. If we had the ears to hear it, I think we'd be overwhelmed by it.

But God hears it and God answers their cry through his people and he doesn't come to us when we feel the strongest or we have it all together or our program is impeccable or preaching is without flaw or fault or we've done it all right. Quite often throughout history, he comes to us at a time when we really don't have any natural strength to perform what he's asking us to do. For example, Exodus chapter three.

Let me just read it to you. God comes to Moses and he said, "I've surely seen the oppression of my people "who are in Egypt and I've heard their cry "because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. "I've heard the cry,' God said.

"Now I've come to you and I've come to deliver them "out of the hand of the Egyptians "and to bring them up from that land "to a good and a large land, "a land flowing with milk and honey. "Now therefore behold,' verse nine, "the cry of the children of Israel has come to me "and I've seen the oppression "with which the Egyptians oppressed them. "Come now therefore and I will send you to Pharaoh "that you may bring my people, "the children of Israel out of Egypt." God didn't come to Moses when he had it together.

He came to him after it had all fallen apart. He didn't come to him when he was in the pinnacle of strength and influence and authority. Came to him when he stuttered.

And the only thing there to listen to him most times were the sheep he was looking after in the backside of the desert. And he came to him as a visible sign. Sometimes this is how the favor of God comes.

It comes as a visible sign. You're reading your Bible and something pops off the page that you simply can't ignore. You remember he came to Moses as a burning bush and he simply couldn't turn away from that, what he saw before him.

Sometimes you're reading and it just, it pops out of the page. I've had that happen to me several times in my lifetime when God is trying to speak to me. You can be riding the subway and you look up and there's a poster on the top of the subway and suddenly it just seems to come off the wall and go right into your spirit.

God can use anything. He used the bush in Moses' case. He can use anything.

It's a visible sign that his favor has come to you. He's not asking you for faith to procure favor. His favor has come to you.

He's asking you now for faith to believe that his favor has come. In spite of your struggles, in spite of your past failure, in spite of your weakness, in spite of your age, no matter what it is that you are doing or have done, suddenly, because somebody else is crying out to God, his favor comes to you. And his favor rests on you.

And he says, I'm gonna give you the ability to bring others out of captivity. You can't do it by might or by human strength or reasoning. You can only do it by the spirit of God.

And all I require of you is faith. Faith to get up and believe that in the ridiculousness of the preaching of the cross as the world sees it, there's such a power that even the most powerful army and leader on the face of the earth will bend its knee before God. God came to Gideon, not at a time when he had it all together.

Gideon is the type of the church who's just trying to eke out a living, trying to survive, trying to thresh wheat in private, may I put it that way, trying to study the Bible, embrace truth. But there's such a hostility towards the truth of that generation that an encroaching army would come in every year and just devour everything that the people of God were trying to achieve. And we're living in a generation quite similar to that where this encroaching army is standing up and trying to devour every permitting in the country, every mention of God in every school, everything of virtue, everything of morality, everything that is right and honest and good.

There's this encroaching army that's come in upon our borders and is trying to steal everything that the people of God have established and hold dear. And suddenly before Gideon appears a messenger, similar to the way that I'm speaking to you today, a messenger appears to him. It says, the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, the Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor.

The Lord is with you, you mighty woman or man of resource. That's what it means. You have power that you don't understand that you have.

You are being given something of God to do something that God has called you to do. Now Gideon was not exactly filled with faith at this moment. He said to him, oh my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why then is all this happened to us? Where are all the miracles which our fathers told us about? Saying, did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hand of the Midianites.

It's not like he had faith looking for favor. You understand the point is that favor came to him and was asking him for faith. It's completely different.

He was struggling with unbelief. Where are you God? Is your power long gone? I heard what you did through Moses. I heard what you did when the people were captivated in Egypt, but that's so long ago.

Now things have changed and you found some inexplicable flaw in us and you've walked away from us and you're not gonna use us for your glory any longer. You've delivered us now into the hands of our enemies. Then the Lord said to him, go in this might of yours and you will save Israel from the hand of the Midianites.

Have not I sent you? The favor of God has come to you. Now Gideon, I'm asking you to believe. I'm asking you to believe that if you will be willing to be visible, vulnerable and boldly declare the truth that you know, that I will use your life to deliver the people and take their captors captive.

Remember the call of Moses is to bring the people out of captivity and that's grand in itself. That's exactly what happened. But the call to Gideon was to take the captivity captive, to enter into a spiritual warfare that only God himself can perform.

In the natural, it was a ridiculous military plan to take 300 people, put a torch in a clay jar, smash the jar on the top of a mountaintop with 135,000 soldiers standing against you. You met the odds were so against them to lift the torch high and say the sword of the Lord and the sword of Gideon. In other words, God is able to do what God says he will do through whom God says he will do it.

God is God. Let not the nations exalt themselves. Let not the heathen boast against God.

Let no power of hell and darkness say aha, we have the people of God in captivity. Let not arrogance boast itself in any generation for God is and God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. Paul the apostle in 2 Corinthians chapter one talks about a time in his life and the lives of those that were with him where it appeared that all was lost.

Says, we don't want you to be ignorant, brethren. 2 Corinthians 1.8, of the trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened beyond measure above strength so that we despaired even of life. Anybody here understand that this morning? Anybody here experiencing that? I'm sure there are some of you were able to stand up and say, brothers, sisters, would you pray for me? I'm in such trouble.

I'm so pressed down on every side. I'm so out of strength. I don't know if I can go on living.

And I don't wanna live like this. If this is what my life is gonna be, I don't want to live like this. And Paul said, we had the sense of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death and does deliver us in whom we trust that he will still deliver us.

You see, the call, the favor of God came to Moses in his old age and in his weakness and in his failure. The favor of God came to Gideon in his lack of supply, his lack of any ability to go forward in his own strength. The favor of God came to Paul when Paul knew I'm not able to go forward in my own strength, but there is an inner strength of God in me.

I believe that it will be as God told me. I believe that all things are working together for good because I love God and I'm called according to his purpose. I believe that though I may be bound, the word of God cannot be bound.

I believe, I believe that if all I have is a piece of paper and a pen to write to my friends that somehow a great victory is going to come out of this. I believe because God has planted a resolve in my heart that all things are possible still to those who believe. I believe that I don't have to see the victory to experience it.

At the end of Paul's life, he could say, Christ has appeared to me time and again, time when I was in the deep, when I was in prison, when I was in places where it's impossible to go forward, Christ has appeared to me and given me strength that could only come from God to do what God had called me to do, to bring the word of God to those who live in darkness, to bring the light of God to those who have no hope, to go in by the pen if necessary into every inner prison. As Silas and I once knew in the early stages of our walk with God, knowing that God can shake every door, set every captive free and bring light into darkened places. The word of God did not come to us by men and women who lived in a hammock, folks.

They were forged on an anvil. You read it in the book of Hebrews. They were sawn in two, they were ridiculed on the earth.

They had difficulties in trials. The torch kept being passed from one to another, to another, to another. Finally, it's in our hands again today.

And thank God they didn't choose a life of ease. Thank God they went to prayer meetings. Thank God they understood spiritual authority.

Thank God they lived for a higher purpose than just being happy. Thank God the Holy Spirit could get ahold of their hearts. And Paul said, finally, there's laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the

Lord, the righteous judge will give to me on that day and not to me only, but also all who have loved is appearing.

This brings me right to the end of what God's given me. Who've loved is appearing. Who've loved is coming to us with divine favor.

Who've loved it when God has called us in our weakness and not in our strength. Who've loved it when he's commissioned us to do something we know is hopeless if he's not with us. All those who've loved is appearing.

Everyone who's recognized, yes, we're bankrupt, but he is God. Yes, we've not honored his name the way we should have, but he is God. Yes, we've not occupied our place on the earth as we should occupy it, but he is God.

And for his own namesake, he's calling me again to occupy what is mine. What really was purchased for me on that cross 2,000 years ago and what I'm supposed to be is a son or daughter of God. Oh yes, I love your appearing, Lord.

I don't care how you speak to me. If it's in the word of God or off the rim of a coffee cup, I don't care how you speak to me, but oh God, speak to me. This is what he did for his people Israel.

As a matter of fact, this is what he's going to do for his people Israel in chapter 36. This is a promise yet to be fulfilled. Did you know that? It's for the nation of Israel, it's for the Jewish people.

I'm going to bring you out of all the nations, not because you're even asking me to do it. I'm going to do it because of who I am. I'm going to do it for the honor of my name.

I'm going to so cleanse you. I'm going to so change you. I'm so going to give you a new heart and a new spirit.

I'm going to cause you to put away your idols. I'm going to cleanse you with pure water. I'm going to take you to the prayer meeting and you're going to start asking me to do the same for others that I've done for you.

That's what the end of Ezekiel 36 is all about. Thus saith the Lord God, I will also let the house of Israel inquire of me to do this for them. It's the only time in this chapter that now faith is asking for favor.

Do you understand? The whole of the, from verse 22 to verse 35, favor is asking for faith. But at the end of it, faith is now asking for favor. It's now God's people asking him to do something.

You have so brought us out of captivity. You've so planted us in a place of prosperity. You've so blessed us.

You've so changed us. You've so given us strength. Oh God, would you do it for others? Would you begin to fill your cities, God, with flocks of men and women who are set apart for you as the sheep were on the high feast days in Jerusalem.

God Almighty, not just people attending churches, but people gripped by the spirit of God, people wanting to live for God, people set apart for God, people knowing the favor of God as we are now knowing it. Oh God, he says, I will let them inquire of me to do this. I will increase their men like a flock, like a flock offered

as a holy sacrifice, like the flock of Jerusalem on its feast days.

The ruined cities shall be filled with flocks of men and they shall know that I am the Lord. We are living at a moment of God's favor. We are living at a moment where the Lord is calling his people to pray.

We're living at a divine moment where he has determined to glorify his own name one last time. Coast to coast, town to town, church to church, block to block, neighborhood to neighborhood, house to house by the grace of Almighty God. A moment of favor.

And now he asks us for faith. Do you believe? Moses could have stayed in the desert. Gideon could have stayed hiding behind his father's house.

Esther could have hid in the palace. Mary could have said no. Remember when the angel appeared and he said, behold, you're highly favored.

She wasn't asking for a baby. You're highly favored of the Lord. And after God revealed to her his plan, then asked her for faith.

And she said, be it done to your handmaiden according to the word of the Lord. See, favor asks for faith. You'll see that all the way through the scriptures.

Now is when the rubber starts to meet the road. It's when you and I, the vessels of God, the church of Jesus Christ, the testimony of God in the earth, we can identify with Moses and we can identify with Gideon and Esther. We can identify with Mary.

We can identify with almost everybody, but can we identify with them when they moved in their weakness and their littleness into that which became known and still is known worldwide? Can we move with them in our smallness? Can we yield when God begins to speak? Can we walk through the door that God sets before us? Can we believe that our prayers matter? Can we lift our voice like Gideon in the public sphere and declare our testimony and not be afraid of what the consequences could be? And here's my prayer. Lord, let your favor be on me for the sake of others. Let your favor be on me, oh God.

Oh God, speak to me again, not for my sake, Lord. My name is already written in the book of life and I'm not worried about my future, but for the sake of others, God, would you let your favor come to me again? Your favor, your calling, whatever it is you have for my life, would you open my heart to it? Would you help me not to live in the past, but to embrace the future? And would you give me a heart to believe that you will use my life supernaturally for their good? Not for my good, for their good. It may lead me to jail, but it might lead them to freedom.

You understand? That's what happened to Paul. He went to jail, others got free. Let your favor be upon me.

We're living in that moment now where the favor of God is here. You feel it in your heart. You know it in your heart.

I'm not telling you something you don't know because God's already been speaking to you. He's been speaking about what he would do through you. You.

Not Times Square Church, you. What he would do through you. It will always be supernatural.

It will always be outside the boundaries of your own ability. It will always be something that only God can do. That's his favor.

Father, we thank you that this could be a year like none other that we've ever experienced in our lifetime. It could be a year that we'll never see again. I thank Lord of the time that you passed by Jerusalem and they didn't recognize your coming.

And you said that they will never see you again until they say blessed is who comes in the name of the Lord. Father God, I pray for every person, everyone here, that none of us would push you away. That our hearts would be open and allow you to speak over us what you have chosen to and to lead us where you've said that we need to go.

Give us a heart, Lord, to move with you for the sake of others who need to know you. Lift us out of self-concern, self-focus. God, give us the focus of Christ and the heart of God.

I thank you for this with all of my heart. In Jesus' name. Now, listen to me carefully.

Here's my altar call this morning. It's really simple. I've heard the message, Lord, let your favor rest on me.

That means God, speak to me. Show me what you would have me to do. Lead me in that way.

For the sake of somebody who's crying out for you, God, lead me, help me, Lord Jesus Christ. Open my ears to your voice. Open my heart to your will.

Open my life to your way. You're asking me to believe that you could use me. So speak to me, Lord, and I will believe.

Speak to me clearly and I will follow. That's the altar call. If that means something to you today, I'm gonna open the front of the sanctuary and ask you to slip out of your seats up in the balcony of the main sanctuary over in the annex.

You could step between the screens and just make your way down. And we're gonna pray, and we're just gonna pray together and believe God. 2019 is the year that favor asks for faith.

You know, Samuel, he was in the temple. He was worshiping. He was going about the duties that had been given him there.

But yet one day, the voice of God came to him. And he wasn't used to hearing the voice of God himself. He had obviously used to the religious leaders speaking for God, but he wasn't used to it himself.

And one day, the voice of God came to him. And this is my prayer for you today. That the voice of God come to you.

Come to you. On your part, on your part, it's just to say, speak, Lord, I'm listening. It's all you gotta do.

Speak, Lord, I'm listening. And God will start whispering into your heart something about other people that he's desired to do through your life, things he's going to take you into and do through you that only he can do. We've been a church world that's lived in the natural far too long.

We need the supernatural, the indwelling presence of God's Holy Spirit to guide us now. All of God's people, all of God's people. Remember he said to Israel, then the world will know, then they will know.

When you are brought to the place that only I can take you, then they will know that I am God. Father, thank you. God, thank you for these men, for these women, Lord, at this altar and for those inside this sanctuary, those who are online are saying, Lord, speak, for I'm listening.

I want to hear your voice. You are going to do something in my life and you're going to do something through my life. Help me to hear what that is.

I am part of this testimony that's supposed to be wondered at in the world. And so, Lord God, I open my heart. I pray for the people now that we would all open our hearts and say, Lord, come, come, Lord Jesus, come, Lord Jesus, and do the work in us and through us that only you can do.

Let this moment of favor, God, produce faith in us. May we never say no to you. May we be among those who say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Blessed is your voice, O God. Blessed is your Holy Spirit. Blessed is the will that you have for my life.

Blessed is it all, O God, for this is what I long for. O Jesus, O Jesus, be glorified on the earth one more time. Be glorified in our cities.

Be glorified in our towns. Be glorified, my God, in New York. Be glorified, God, on every street corner, be glorified.

Lord, let your favor rest upon us now and guide us and lead us. And just help us not to make a mess of it all, O God. Help us, Lord, just to do it your way and to stay yielded to you, Lord, and stay humble in your sight.

God, I thank you. I thank you for willing people, Lord. It's what your heart has always longed for.

It's what you've searched for, somebody whose heart is open to you. Thank you, Lord. You have multiples in this house today and multiples online, and you have people in North Jersey.

You have people in our annex. You have people in whom fellowships that will make a difference in their world. Go in this thy might.

I have sent you. Father God, let that sink so deep in our hearts that we will never be the same again. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen and amen.

Praise God. Amen.

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