

Finding Favor with God

“A study of how Christians receive the favor of God”

Class Copy

Biblical Text: Genesis 49:13 and Deuteronomy 33:18a

“Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships; and his border shall be unto Zidon”.

“And of Zebulun he (Moses) said, ‘Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out...”

Introduction

We hear it often said that God showers His favor on those who are faithful. All of us desire the favor or approval of God. But there are countless traps that can snare us on our Christian journey and cause us to fail in our attempt to please our Creator. God reviews our performance daily. He sees our ministry successes and failures. And how God continues to use us is determined by our willingness to be obedient and follow His plan.

Our desire to understand and receive the favor of God takes us to a somewhat unfamiliar patriarch of the scriptures...Zebulun.

Background

Zebulun was Jacob's 10th son, and the 6th and last son of Leah (Genesis 30:19-20). There is no personal record of Zebulun. Nonetheless, there are certain facts in the scriptures that paint a picture of this son of Jacob as one whose life was admirable and commendable.

During the wilderness journey, it was Zebulun, Judah and Issachar who formed an alliance to protect the Israelites on their journey. They traveled ahead of the other tribes,

to form the ‘first camp’, because they were the courageous and fierce fighting men of the twelve tribes of Israel.

I. Favor is not always immediately discernable.

Faithful Christians do not always see immediate visible proof of God’s favor. Only God knows the grand design for our lives and sees beyond our present circumstances. Zebulun is the perfect example of this truth.

Zebulun’s territory was between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea. It would prove to be *prime real estate* in the New Testament. God assigned Zebulun this portion of the Holy Land and charged him with its preservation for future generations. This holy assignment was proof of Zebulun’s trustworthiness, but not until generations later when its importance was revealed.

Today we realize how important Zebulun’s divine assignment was. The name Zebulun means *dwelling or habitation*. And it was here that Isaiah’s prophecy was fulfilled, saying, “*The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.*” (Isaiah 9:2).

Zebulun’s territory became the home of Joseph, the carpenter, and his son Jesus. Jesus was raised in Nazareth, and began His ministry in Cana, which were both part of Zebulun’s territory. In addition, Jesus performed many miracles along a section of the shore in Zebulun’s territory.

Question: Why are we so focused on the discernable favor of God?

II. Favor is passed on to future generations.

We sing that “only what we do for Christ will last”. Zebulun’s favor lasted way beyond his lifespan.

1. We know from the scriptures that Zebulun had 3 sons (Genesis 46) at the time of the migration to the Promised Land. These three sons became the founders of the chief families of the tribe.
2. When Jacob gave his final blessing to his twelve sons, he sighted Zebulun as a capable protector of the port that would be a safe haven for ships bringing essential goods to the Holy Land, and as a harbor to protect against attack.
3. The tribe of Zebulun is mentioned, not just in the prophecies of Isaiah, but in the visions of Ezekiel (48:26-33).
4. In the New Testament, the Apostle John on the Isle of Patmos, mentioned the 12,000 saints of Zebulun who found favor and were ‘sealed’ or preserved for eternity (Revelation 7:8).

Generations of descendants benefit from our faithfulness to the work of kingdom building. We are not able to see the full impact of our devotion to duty and discipleship, but we trust God to reward our future generations who carry forward the seeds of faith that we have planted.

Think of how many faithful saints in our own church who have made their mark, and we are still benefiting from their service! Some have founded ministries that still flourish; some have left financial legacies to ensure that our church remains a viable part of this community. Whatever their role, their expressions of faith have ensured God’s favor, and their faith legacy.

Question: All of us have a vital role to play in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What is your role?

III. Mark Your “Favor” Journey

Proverbs encourages us to stay on the path of wisdom, and be careful not to stray “to the right or to the left” (Proverbs 4:25-27). When we take the time to mark the trail of our faith journey with examples of faithfulness, we ensure that those who follow us will stay on the right path. Our markers not only honor God; they also influence those who follow behind us to live genuinely changed lives that are touched by Christ.

Here are a few essential markers to light your journey. Rate each one on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being your LEAST effort, and 5 being your BEST effort.

- ___ Honor God with your worship and praise.
- ___ Live so that God can use you as an example of His Will.
- ___ Give of your time and talent to strengthen the Body of Christ.
- ___ Study the Word, so you can clearly recognize evil when it crosses your path.
- ___ Share your testimony of faith with the people in your world.

Now it’s time to improve your score by working on those areas where you may be weak. Commit yourself to serving the Lord with all your heart, not just in worship, but with your witness and your work. Every time you do something for the Lord, you are putting more ‘bricks’ on your temple; a temple that will surely reap God’s favor!

Question: If you were to take your journey to heaven today, what legacy would you leave behind?

Conclusion

You are the key to finding favor with God. The path has been laid out for all of us, and it is up to us to take the necessary steps in the right direction. Our prayer must be that we will develop a “Zebulun” loyalty and dependability, moving ever forward and never looking back. When we do, God will shower us with His favor!