

# Grace of Jesus

## Introduction

Do you want to be one of God's favourites? Get special treatment you don't deserve? Be forgiven each time you mess up? Hopefully by the end of this talk, you'll know how.

Do you remember last week that Carol told the story of how God created the world? Each day God saw what he had made and said it was good – until the last day when he made people. Then he said it was “very good”. God was pleased with what he had made, and he used to spend time with his people and they all enjoyed each others company.

Unfortunately it didn't last very long. If you haven't heard the story, you can look it up in Genesis, but Adam and Eve both ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and disobeyed God. They had to leave the garden of Eden, and everything got harder – they had to work to get food, and it got harder to stay healthy, relationships went wrong and so on.

## The fall

Much later on, in the new testament, Paul wrote a letter to the Romans. I'll be quoting little snippets from it, but if you want more, read chapter 5. In it, he talked about this story from Genesis, explaining what had happened.

Rom 5:12 “... sin entered the world through one man...”

We have a saying in Britain: “Like father like son”. It means that boys often have the same attitudes and behave in the same way as their dad. It doesn't matter what the family looks like of course, whether just one mum or one dad, two mums, two dads or anything else - children tend to take on the attitudes of their parents. It doesn't always happen of course -people can grow up to be different to their parents.

Adam was the man Paul was talking about when he said “sin entered the world through one man.” Paul said

Rom 4:23 “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”

Just like Adam, all of us have done things God doesn't like. But Paul goes on to say more about Adam – it wasn't just that we are like him.

Rom 5:16 “...The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation...”

Even if we hadn't sinned, the judgement had happened. People have been excluded from the garden of Eden, and live in a world that has become broken – all because of the one man. (Though of course we know that Eve was involved as well as Adam, and the snake, who had seemingly already rebelled against God was there too.)

## Favour

Let's change tack a bit, and think about favour. Do you have some favourite things Maybe favourite sweets, or food? Perhaps a favourite place you love to go to as often as you can?

Do you have favourite people? We all like to think we treat people equally, but let's be honest here – we don't really. If someone is one of your favourites, or to put it another way “has your favour”, you will give them a bit more leeway than someone who doesn't. You may be more willing to go out of your way when they need help.

How if favour given to someone?

There are TV shows that reward people for doing good things -perhaps a carer or someone who has done something great for the community – they will be given awards and sometimes prizes. But not everyone who does these things will get awards – it is fairly random how the favour is given. Lots of people probably deserve this recognition, but few get it.

Other shows will find someone in need. One famous one discovers a family who have been struggling, and then sends them away for a week or two while they completely redo the house for them, adding features specifically suited to them. It's fantastic seeing how the community get together to give in this way, and the family are always overwhelmed by the favour they have received. They get the favour just by being in need. The problem is, of course, that there are far more people in need than can be reached by this sort of program – just being in need isn't enough, somehow you need to be chosen.

Do you think there will ever be a show that finds someone really horrible and mean, and does really nice things for them? Generally favour is given to those who seem deserving, or are in need, but it's possible to fall out of favour with someone too.

Have you ever had a good friend do something that hurt you? Either emotionally or physically? How long does it take before you would be willing to do something nice for them again?

## **Getting God's favour**

We saw that Paul talked about how all of us have a problem. Not only have we sinned but we are all judged too. Wouldn't it be great to be in God's favour? Having him forgive us quickly, and always be doing good things for us?

Luke 2:52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man

It's possible to increase in favour with God – but unfortunately this verse doesn't tell us how. The surrounding context implies it was related to how he lived out his life with other people.

It's possible to seek God's favour through prayer.

Exodus 32:11-14 describes how Moses sought the favour of God on behalf of the people of Israel. God had decided to wipe them all out and start again with Moses. Moses pleaded for God to have favour on his people, to forgive them and go with them as their God. He managed to change God's mind by reminding God of what he'd said.

It is Paul who really explains this to us, though he doesn't use the word “favour”.

Rom 5:6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

You remember the program that won't be made? Doing nice stuff for mean people? That's exactly what Paul says Jesus did for us. We certainly hadn't earned God's favour – but we were in need, and he decided to sort it out for us.

He compares what Adam did, and what Jesus did.

Rom 5:18 Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.

Totally undeserved favour from God.

Imagine that each time someone sins a bit of rubbish is thrown onto a field. Think of how many people there are, and how many sins each does. The field isn't big enough- the rubbish would be a huge mountain – towering over us, and probably taking weeks to get to the top. This mountain was started by just one man – Adam.

Then imagine Jesus walking up to it, blowing on it, and the whole lot disappearing. Vanished. Gone as if it had never been there. That's the effect his death and resurrection had.

Getting God's favour is very simple.

Rom 5:2 "...we have gained access by faith into this grace..."

You get to be in God's favour by faith. James had a great way of describing faith in the letter he wrote to the Israelites.

Ask. Believe you'll get it.

So, if you want to be one of God's favourites, go ahead. It's all there waiting for you.