

I-THOU FAVOR

¹⁸ Joseph said to him, “No, my father, this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head.” ¹⁹ But his father refused and said, “I know, my son, I know. He too will become a people, and he too will become great. Nevertheless, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his descendants will become a group of nations.”

Genesis 48:18,19

¹² Surely, LORD, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield.

Psalms 5:12

⁵ For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.

Psalms 30:5

² When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter.

Esther 5:2

I. God's choices of favor are always unconventional.

* The firstborn child was usually the leader of the family with double portion privileges.

(Exodus 13:11-15; Deuteronomy 21:17; Genesis 25:23,31,34; I Chronicles 5:1,2)

** But God frequently rejected the first born, choosing others instead.

A. God chose Abel over Cain. (Genesis 4:1-7)

¹ Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man." ² Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. ³ In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. ⁴ And Abel also brought an offering--fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, ⁵ but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. ⁶ Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? ⁷ If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it."

B. Shem over Japheth. (Genesis 10:21)

²¹ Sons were also born to Shem, whose older brother was Japheth; Shem was the ancestor of all the sons of Eber.

C. Moses was not the first born; Aaron was three years older than he. (Exodus 7:7)

⁷ Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three when they spoke to Pharaoh.

D. Abraham was not first born. (Genesis 11:26)

²⁶ After Terah had lived 70 years, he became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran.

E. Isaac over Ishmael. (Genesis 17:18-21)

¹⁸ And Abraham said to God, “If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!” ¹⁹ Then God said, “Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. ²⁰ And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. ²¹ But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year.”

F. Jacob wasn't first; Esau was. (Genesis 25:24-26)

²⁴ When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. ²⁵ The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. ²⁶ After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them.

G. Perez over Zera. (Genesis 38:27-30)

²⁷ When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. ²⁸ As she was giving birth, one of them put out his hand; so the midwife took a scarlet thread and tied it on his wrist and said, “This one came out first.” ²⁹ But when he drew back his hand, his brother came out, and she said, “So this is how you have broken out!” And he was named Perez. ³⁰ Then his brother, who had the scarlet thread on his wrist, came out. And he was named Zerah.

H. Ephraim over Manasseh. (Genesis 48:1-22)

¹ Some time later Joseph was told, “Your father is ill.” So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim along with him. ² When Jacob was told, “Your son Joseph has come to you,” Israel rallied his strength and sat up on the bed. ³ Jacob said to Joseph, “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and there he blessed me ⁴ and said to me, ‘I am going to make you fruitful and increase your numbers. I will make you a community of peoples, and I will give this land as an everlasting possession to your descendants after you.’” ⁵ “Now then, your two sons born to you in Egypt before I came to you here will be reckoned as mine; Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are mine. ⁶ Any children born to you after them will be yours; in the territory they inherit they will be reckoned under the names of their brothers. ⁷ As I was returning from Paddan, to my sorrow Rachel died in the land of Canaan while we were still on the way, a little distance from Ephrath. So I buried her there beside the road to Ephrath” (that is, Bethlehem). ⁸ When Israel saw the sons of Joseph, he asked, “Who are these?” ⁹ “They are the sons God has given me here,” Joseph said to his father. Then Israel said, “Bring them to me so I may bless them.” ¹⁰ Now Israel’s eyes were failing because of old age, and he could hardly see. So Joseph brought his sons close to him, and his father kissed them and embraced them. ¹¹ Israel said to Joseph, “I never expected to see your face again, and now God has allowed me to see your children too.” ¹² Then Joseph removed them from Israel’s knees and bowed

down with his face to the ground. ¹³ And Joseph took both of them, Ephraim on his right toward Israel's left hand and Manasseh on his left toward Israel's right hand, and brought them close to him. ¹⁴ But Israel reached out his right hand and put it on Ephraim's head, though he was the younger, and crossing his arms, he put his left hand on Manasseh's head, even though Manasseh was the firstborn. ¹⁵ Then he blessed Joseph and said, "May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked faithfully, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, ¹⁶ the Angel who has delivered me from all harm --may he bless these boys. May they be called by my name and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and may they increase greatly on the earth." ¹⁷ When Joseph saw his father placing his right hand on Ephraim's head he was displeased; so he took hold of his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. ¹⁸ Joseph said to him, "No, my father, this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head." ¹⁹ But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He too will become a people, and he too will become great. Nevertheless, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his descendants will become a group of nations." ²⁰ He blessed them that day and said, "In your name will Israel pronounce this blessing: 'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh.'" So he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh. ²¹ Then Israel said to Joseph, "I am about to die, but God will be with you and take you back to the land of your fathers. ²² And to you I give one more ridge of land than to your brothers, the ridge I took from the Amorites with my sword and my bow."

I. Gideon was the youngest in his family. (Judges 6:11-16)

¹¹ The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. ¹² When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, “The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.” ¹³ “Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, ‘Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?’ But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.” ¹⁴ The LORD turned to him and said, “Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?” ¹⁵ “Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.” ¹⁶ The LORD answered, “I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive.”

J. David was chosen over his brothers to be king.
(I Samuel 16:1-13)

¹ The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.” ² But Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me.” The LORD said, “Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’ ³ Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.” ⁴ Samuel did

what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, "Do you come in peace?"⁵ Samuel replied, "Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me." Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.⁶ When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed stands here before the LORD."⁷ But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, "The LORD has not chosen this one either."⁹ Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, "Nor has the LORD chosen this one."¹⁰ Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, "The LORD has not chosen these."¹¹ So he asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?" "There is still the youngest," Jesse answered. "He is tending the sheep." Samuel said, "Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives."¹² So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features. Then the LORD said, "Rise and anoint him; this is the one."¹³ So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah.

K. Solomon was chosen over his brothers. (I Chronicles 28:5)
⁵ Of all my sons--and the LORD has given me many--he has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel.

II. Favor brings fire.

* God's favor triggers envy, jealousy, and attack.

III. Seven facts about favor.

A. Favor can bring impossible things to birth.
(Genesis 18:3,10)

³ He said, "If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. ... ¹⁰ Then one of them said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son." Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him.

B. Favor can cause your enemies to give you resources you didn't earn. (Exodus 3:21; I Samuel 27:5)

[Exo 3:21 NIV] ²¹ "And I will make the Egyptians favorably disposed toward this people, so that when you leave you will not go empty-handed.

[1Sa 27:5 NIV] ⁵ Then David said to Achish, "If I have found favor in your eyes, let a place be assigned to me in one of the country towns, that I may live there. Why should your servant live in the royal city with you?"

C. Favor will cause you to be brought before great people.
(I Samuel 16:22)

²² Then Saul sent word to Jesse, saying, "Allow David to remain in my service, for I am pleased with him."

D. Favor alone can bring true satisfaction.

(Deuteronomy 33:23)

²³ About Naphtali he said: “Naphtali is abounding with the favor of the LORD and is full of his blessing; he will inherit southward to the lake.”

E. Favor will point you out and rapidly change your destiny.

(Ruth 2:2-17)

² And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, “Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor.” Naomi said to her, “Go ahead, my daughter.” ³ So she went out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek. ⁴ Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters, “The LORD be with you!” “The LORD bless you!” they answered. ⁵ Boaz asked the overseer of his harvesters, “Who does that young woman belong to?” ⁶ The overseer replied, “She is the Moabite who came back from Moab with Naomi. ⁷ She said, ‘Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.’ She came into the field and has remained here from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter.” ⁸ So Boaz said to Ruth, “My daughter, listen to me. Don’t go and glean in another field and don’t go away from here. Stay here with the women who work for me. ⁹ Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the women. I have told the men not to lay a hand on you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled.” ¹⁰ At this,

she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, “Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me--a foreigner?” ¹¹ *Boaz replied, “I’ve been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband--how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before.* ¹² *May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.”* ¹³ *“May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my lord,” she said. “You have put me at ease by speaking kindly to your servant--though I do not have the standing of one of your servants.”* ¹⁴ *At mealtime Boaz said to her, “Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar.” When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over.* ¹⁵ *As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, “Let her gather among the sheaves and don’t reprimand her.* ¹⁶ *Even pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don’t rebuke her.”* ¹⁷ *So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley she had gathered, and it amounted to about an ephah.*

F. Favor will cause authority figures to fund your ministry.
(Nehemiah 2:5)

⁵ *and I answered the king, “If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it.”*

G. Favor will empower you to deliver and promote those around you. (Esther 2:17; Daniel 2:49)

[Est 2:17 NIV] ¹⁷ Now the king was attracted to Esther more than to any of the other women, and she won his favor and approval more than any of the other virgins. So he set a royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

[Dan 2:49 NIV] ⁴⁹ Moreover, at Daniel's request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court.