

The Power of Blessing Part 3

We have been talking about the power of blessing, the importance of blessing our spouse, our children, our friends and the significant others in our life. All of us are called to bless others. If you remember we shared the five points of blessing that Gary Smalley and John Trent mention in their book by the same name. Meaningful and appropriate touch, the spoken word, expressing high value, picturing a special future and an active commitment to seeing that blessing and that future develop in that person's life.

One of the reasons we're able to share that blessing with family and others is because we have been blessed. I want to focus this morning on the amazing blessing we have received from the Lord. In his letter to the Ephesian church Paul details so well for us the blessings we have received by God's grace. Think of this as the blessing, Jesus Style! Turn to Ephesians 1 and look with me at the blessing we've received. It's almost too good to be true, but it is God's word so we know it's the truth!

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.” Ephesians 1:3 Notice the completeness of his blessing. We struggle to bless others, we withhold blessing at times for various reasons but God has blessed us with EVERY spiritual blessing in Christ! The blessings of God are without limit if we will walk with Him in faith and in obedience to his word.

Peter tells us **“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness.” 2 Peter 1:3** Every spiritual blessing, everything we need to live a godly life in Christ Jesus has been provided. Nothing has been left out. His blessing is perfect and complete.

I mentioned as parents we try to bless our children, to equip them and prepare them for the future but we all fail in some respect. You send your child off to college and think, “what did I fail to tell her? Does she know how to check the oil or change a flat? Does she know how to throat punch a guy?” Our equipping is not always complete, we leave out valuable lessons but with Jesus there is no question. The resources of heaven belong to us through Jesus and everything we need to live for Him is found in Him. His provision, his blessing is complete. Reach for it, claim it by faith, rely upon it. You can live for God, you can do what's right, because Jesus has blessed you with heavenly blessings! Look at the next verse.

“For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight.” Ephesians 1:4

He chose us! Before we were ever born, he chose us. Some of you know the sting of being overlooked, never chosen. Some of you know what it is to have your father or mother belittle you, make fun of you, pass you over and choose another child or even a friend of yours rather than choosing you, encouraging and supporting you. You grew up with criticism rather than encouragement or complement. You could never do anything right. You never felt accepted, needed, included, wanted. You were never chosen, for anything, by anyone, but hear me today. Jesus knew everything about you. He knew your faults and failure, your weakness and shortcomings, yet he chose you! He has chosen you! Before you were even born, God already knew you and wanted you. He chose you, now you need to decide to choose Him!

Not only did he choose you, he chose you to be made holy and blameless in his sight. Holy means set apart, special to Him. You may have never been special, perhaps no one ever made you feel special in your life, but God Himself, through his Son, has set you apart for Himself. He wants to make you holy in Christ. You belong to Him!

You are made holy and blameless. In Christ you are blameless. You think it must have been your fault. You must have done something that caused that rejection, the mistreatment, the abuse, the anger they took out on you. You’ve carried the pain, born the blame, and perhaps even at times it was your fault, but if you will confess your sins and ask Jesus to forgive you and come into your heart and life, if you’ve done that, then Jesus says “I have washed you clean, forgiven you and now I declare you blameless. Forgiven.” Do you hear me? The bible says there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Through faith in Christ he declares you holy and blameless!

The guilt you carried for so very long, the mistakes you made, the rebellion, the sin, the disobedience, the moral failure. All of it leaves you feeling useless, defeated, unwanted by God, unacceptable to him. But when you come to Christ and repent of your sins and trust him for salvation, he forgives you, cleanses you – heart, mind, soul and spirit. By his grace you experience his forgiveness and you’ll be made to stand before him blameless.

The devil is described in the bible as the accuser of believers. He is determined to remind you of your guilt, your sins and your past. He points the finger at you and shouts “you were wrong, you sinned, you are to blame.” Samuel Gandy in the hymn *His Be the Victor’s Name*

wrote, “Well may the Accuser roar of ills that I have done, I know them all and thousands more, my God He knoweth none.” What a blessing we have received. We are made to stand holy and blameless before God through the saving grace of Jesus Christ!

Verse 5 says **“In love He predestined us to be adopted as His children through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will – to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves.” Ephesians 1:5-6**

The blessing continues. God predestined us to be adopted as his very own children through Jesus Christ. God not only chose us to be special, to be holy and blameless, he chose us to be his very own family. In Roman culture adopted children were entitled to all the same legal rights as natural born children. Paul says in Romans that we are heirs of God and joint heirs or co-heirs with Jesus Christ. We are made part of God’s family in every sense of the word. Peter says once we were not a people but now we are the people of God, we had not received mercy but now we have received mercy. We have a home, we’re not alone, we are part of God’s great family. All of this is according to our heavenly Father’s will, this is what he wanted for us, and it is through his glorious grace, his unmerited favor, which he has freely given us in Jesus, the One he loves. What a blessing! And that’s not all.

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.” Ephesians 1:7-8

Redemption through his blood. What does that mean? To redeem something or someone means you pay the required price. Like paying a ransom for someone held captive. Jesus redeemed us and the price required was his life, his blood. There was a drama played out in the spiritual realm. We were held captive by sin and in need of a savior, a redeemer, someone that had the ransom price and was qualified to pay it. Jesus, the sinless Son of God, paid the price, liberating us from slavery to sin and as we said, the ransom price He paid was with his own blood. We have been redeemed from sin’s control, cleansed, set free, adopted into his family.

The verse goes on to say that our sins, our trespasses have all been forgiven. The word forgiven means release, a letting go, as if they had not been committed. Because we have accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior, he treats us as though we had not sinned, releasing us from the penalty of our sin by paying that penalty for us, taking our place on the cross. We owed a

debt for our sins we could never pay and Jesus took our place and released us from that debt by paying the full and ultimate price with his own life.

The key to such incredible treatment and blessing is grace. Verse 6 speaks of the grace that He has so freely given us. Verse 7-8 speak of the riches of His grace which he lavished on us. It wasn't just a little bit of grace. He has lavished his grace and his blessings upon us. Grace has been freely, richly given, extravagantly poured over us. Someone said grace was free but it was not cheap. It cost Jesus his very life but it is extended to us freely. Unmerited favor, available to all who will come to him in repentance and faith and receive him as Savior and Lord. We can't earn his grace, but we can receive it by faith in Jesus. Everything we receive from God, every spiritual blessing is through the work of his Son! That means everything we receive from God is through his grace. It is because of or by his grace that we are here today. It is because of grace that we are saved. It is because of his grace that we have the promise of heaven. It is because of grace that we have eternal life. It is because of his grace that we can walk according to the Spirit and live a victorious, overcoming life. It is truly amazing grace!

From Smalley and Trent's perspective, we have been blessed. God met all five aspects of the blessing. Jesus is God incarnate, God in the flesh appearing to us. In that way Jesus provided that meaningful touch. He came to us in flesh, not afraid to touch us in our brokenness and sin. He ransomed us, brought us home and made us part of his family. Like the father in Jesus' story of the prodigal, Jesus wrapped the robe around us and put shoes on our feet and a ring on our finger. He blessed us with his spoken word when he told us we were forgiven and now part of his family. He has given us his word that we can read and understand. He expressed high value in us, giving worth to us, when he shed his own blood to redeem us and save us. Could God do anything to give greater testimony to our value and worth than to have His Only Son die on the cross in our place, to redeem our life with his life, his blood? Jesus has shown us how valuable we are to the Father through his death on the cross.

Has he pictured a special future for us? You know he has. One translation of verse 11 says "we have obtained an inheritance" and again in verse 14 it speaks of the guarantee of our inheritance. The inheritance it speaks of is the final redemption of God's own possession, that's all of us. It's the redemption of our bodies and us being present, at home, in the presence of the Lord. It's talking about our future, our destiny in Christ. Do we have a special future? One of these days, either by death or by the rapture of the church, we are going to leave this world and

we will then have a brand new body like his, a body that will never be touched by sickness, disease, suffering, sorrow, aging or death. Our destiny is heaven, where God himself will wipe away every tear from our eyes and we will be home at last. Is there a special future for us? Heaven with our Lord and family and friends and all of God's saints, forever. That's my future!

The last point of the blessing that Smalley and Trent mentioned was an active commitment. Is there an active commitment to us from the Lord? Verse 13 says, **“Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit...” Ephesians 1:13** The Holy Spirit resides in the heart and life of those who have trusted in Jesus as Savior and Lord. He is with us, today, now, this moment, to direct us, empower us, guide us into all truth, to comfort us, to make us more like Jesus, to bear fruit in our life. Jesus said he would never leave us nor forsake us. He would be with us to the end of the age. The Holy Spirit is evidence of that active commitment in our lives. The Holy Spirit is constantly affirming to us that the Lord is with us, that He will see us through to the other side.

In Christ we are blessed with every spiritual blessing. God has touched us, spoken words of healing and restoration and life to us. He has valued us so highly. The bible says “for greater love has no one than this, that they would lay down their life for a friend. For occasionally you will find someone to die for a godly person, but Christ died for us while we were still dead in our trespasses and sins.” He has declared that we have worth because he has made us worthy by his love, his sacrifice, his grace. He has pictured for us a special future for he promised that goodness and mercy would follow us all the days of our lives and then we would dwell in the house of the Lord forever. He is actively committed to seeing his plans and his destiny for us carried out by the working of His Holy Spirit. He has good plans for us, plans to prosper us and give us hope and future. He is watching over us. Praise the Lord, we are recipients of the Blessing of Heaven!

Let me show you one final picture of the blessing. It's found in an unlikely setting but it is one of my favorite pictures and images in the Old Testament. It's chapter 52 of the book of Jeremiah, the last chapter. It is a Babylonian king blessing the exiled king of Judah, king Jehoiachin, showing him mercy. He had been a prisoner in exile for 37 years when Evil Merodach became the king of Babylon. The new king went to the cell of Judah's old king and the literal translation says he lifted up the head of Jehoiachin. I can see him taking him by the hand and lifting him gently to his feet after all these years of being in a prison cell. Look at what

verse 32 says. **“He spoke kindly to him and gave him a seat of honor higher than those of the other kings who were with him in Babylon. So Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes and for the rest of his life ate regularly at the king’s table. Day by day the king of Babylon gave Jehoiachin a regular allowance as long as he lived, till the day of his death.”** Jeremiah 52:32-34 The king blessed him. He spoke kindly to him, after all these years of blame from friends for the exile, and years of derision from enemies in the prison, the king spoke with kind words and gave value and worth to him again. He gave him new clothes in exchange for the old prison rags. He gave him a future and told him he was to sit at the king’s table from now on. He was actively committed to blessing him and gave him a daily allowance, a portion of the king’s goods, each and every day for the rest of his life.

Why do I like this story, beyond just the kindness and mercy shown by this pagan king to Judah’s king? Because I see myself in Jehoiachin and this is what Jesus did for me and for all of us. He found us in a dungeon, in a prison after years of sin and brokenness, neglected, beaten down, alone. He lifted us up and out of the prison of sin. He spoke kindly to us. He put new clothes on us, the clothes of his righteousness. He gave us a future and hope. He invited us to come and feast at his table, as we did this morning as we celebrated communion together. He sat us at his family table. He made us one of his own. He blessed us!

The invitation is still being given. Perhaps you’re like King Jehoiachin, exiled, alone, in a prison of sin and guilt, broken and hurting. Jesus invites you to come home to him. Come and find salvation through his mercy and grace. Come and ask him to forgive you of your sins and give you a new life. He will. He will forgive your sins and give you eternal life. It’s his promise. He will speak the words you’ve been longing to hear. That he loves you. That you are no longer an outcast, a nobody but now you are part of his family. You are not forsaken, you are chosen. You’re no longer a sinner but in Christ he declares you holy and blameless. You’re no longer cursed, you are blessed and you can be a blessing to others. Everything changes when you surrender your life to Jesus.

Remember the passage we read two weeks ago. **“But the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you because the Lord your God loves you.”** Deuteronomy 23:5.

Come share in the blessing as you surrender your life to Jesus.