

Date : 22 January 2023
Theme : Chinese New Year Blessings
Topic : Blessings of God for the family!
Key Message : Deuteronomy 7:12-15
Key verse : ...*You will be blessed more than any other people, none of your men or women will be childless, nor any of your livestock without young...*
Deuteronomy 7:14

Introduction

It is a great thing to live under blessing. It is an even greater thing to be more blessed than any other. The account in Genesis 1 and 2 makes it clear that God had planned for humanity to enjoy the beauty, abundance and fruitfulness of His creation. In the Garden of Eden, God had provided an abundance of resources and means for humans to flourish. Indeed, Genesis is a good place to understand the nature of divine blessing as it contains one sixth of all scriptural references to blessing, by some estimates.

Throughout Genesis, the motif of blessing has been woven through the narratives of Genesis. As the narratives are structured along the lines of generations, they clarify where God's blessing has been given and where it has not.

In Genesis 1:22 God blessed the aquatic and avian creatures with responsibility to multiply and fill the earth. In relation to mankind, however, to be blessed is to have His relational presence with them:

- The narrative describes God *...walking in the garden in the cool of the day...* Genesis 3:8
- While the guilty pair hid from the Lord God, those who are godly are seen as *...walking with God...* Genesis 5:22
- God spoke to Abram and promised His personal guidance *...to go to the land I will show you...* Genesis 12:1
God's enduring relationship with Abraham included the command for Abraham to walk before Him and His covenant to continue into Abraham's offspring Genesis 17:1-2,7
- Abimelech recognised God's presence in Isaac being *...blessed of the Lord* Genesis 26:28-29

Thus, over and over, we read in Genesis, that blessing is preeminently about a right relationship with the Lord. The blessing of His Presence is the core blessing for every man.

1. How does God bless (those in relationship to Him)?

God pronounces His blessing on humans who are in a relationship with Him. When God pronounced blessing on humans, the blessings was communicated *...to them...* Genesis 1:28 which reflects a more intimate relationship than the blessing to fish and birds.

a) Seth's family

- Seth's family was blessed. After he was born, people began to call on God's name. Genesis 4:26 – implying that something good was happening on his watch.
 - Seth's godly line resulted in Enoch Genesis 5:21 (sixth from Adam) as a man who walked with God. In fact this was such a crucial part of who Enoch was that it is repeated twice Genesis 5:22,24. To walk with God means to make a relationship with God part of your everyday lifestyle, to honour God in your choices in every aspect of life. Apparently, in response to Enoch's walk with God, God exempted him from dying and just took him away, instead. *By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death...*
...He was commended as one who pleased God... Hebrews 11:5
 - Enoch's son, Methuselah, had the blessing of long life until just before the flood came.
 - Methuselah's grandson, Noah, found favour with God because of his faithful obedience to God despite growing ungodliness throughout the world. Not only was Noah blessed in being saved, he brought the same faith to his family of 8.

- God tracked Seth's lineage continually for the next 4000 years, because His long term plan was for the Messiah to come through this line. God has long term plans for those who walk with Him.

b) What are God's abundant blessings for obedience? *Deuteronomy 7:12-15*

- Treasured blessings
To be God's special people *...His treasured possession... Deuteronomy 7:6*
- Generational blessings
Ensured of God's covenant of love to 1,000 generations of those who love Him and keep His commandments *Deuteronomy 7:9,12*
- More blessings
Blessed more than any other people *Deuteronomy 7:14*

c) Why is God such a generous Blessor?

He blesses His own as His special treasure, not because of their numbers, but because of His love. *Deuteronomy 7:8*

2. When should we bless God?

People who have received God's blessings will, in return, bless God as an expression of gratitude and relationship.

- Job blessed the name of the Lord when things went bad *Job 1:21*
 - Job, though he suffered the loss of the external tokens of blessing, rose up and worshipped God because the gift of God Himself was more valuable than the gifts from God. He could bless God because He understood submission in his covenant relationship.

...When times are good be happy; but when times are bad, consider this: God has made the one as well as the other... Ecclesiastes 7:14

- We need to choose a perspective that we can gain during adversity because God has control over both prosperous and adverse circumstances and there is opportunity in each. God gives to us the full range of experiences to discover all there is to gain in our life under the sun. He holds both prosperity and adversity in His hands as well as our best interests in His heart.
- Genesis is not just about a blessed and prosperous people like Abraham and Isaac but it gives examples as to how things pan out for all who walk with God. The divine Blessor will not withhold the blessings that He had spoken about when we bless Him even when times are bad.

3. How do we miss God's blessings?

Beginning with Genesis, Scripture portrays the divine agenda of blessing and cursing (until the consummation of history when, finally, there will be *...no more curse Revelation 22:3*).

God's blessing in Genesis is preeminently about a right relationship with the Lord whereas God's curse signifies a loss of that relationship.

- Cain's curse – loss of relationship with God
Cain said to the Lord...*Today You are driving me from the land and I will be hidden from Your Presence (from Your Face I shall be hidden)... Genesis 4:14,16*
 - Cain saw his curse as two-fold – driven from the land
– driven from God's Presence.
(But God was not the one driving Cain out; he himself chose to depart from the Lord).
 - Curse results when one departs from God's Presence = favour, protection.
Essence of divine blessing *...I will be with you... Genesis 28:15*

- Cain's unrepentance – refusal to heed God's warning about sin (even though God personally tried to correct his destructive behaviour of anger, unbelief, murder).
- Cain's fatal choice ...so Cain went out from the Lord's presence... Genesis 4:16
(He walked out from His relationship with God)
 - The consequences not only affected him but also his subsequent generations. 5 generations down the road, Lamech seems to be more aggressive and vengeful. They revel in temporal achievements to show their abilities. (No mention as to how long they lived or when the next generation was born).

Application

How do we co-operate with God to receive His blessing?

- Being a holy people
 - Sanctified by the blood of Christ
 - Keep being sanctified by His Holy word
 - Walking in obedience to all His commandments all the time
...Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear Me and keep all My commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever! Deuteronomy 5:29
- Walking by faith all the way and lacking nothing
...The Lord your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He has watched over your journey through this vast desert. These 40 years the Lord your God has been with you, and you have not lacked anything. Deuteronomy 2:7
 - Summary of God fulfilling His blessings to His people in the desert – even in the barren wilderness, they would find on earth everything they needed to prosper.
...For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters... a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack in nothing... Deuteronomy 8:7-9
- Choosing wisely – God's blessings are better than the blessings of the world.
...The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it. Proverbs 10:22
God blesses His people indeed.
To receive riches from God is to be blessed.
To have riches without the sorrow is an even greater blessing.

Many rich people are miserable and have great sorrow along with their riches.
Those who have chosen worldly wisdom have suffered loss, like:
 - Lot chose by sight and coveted to set up home in Sodom Genesis 13:9-11.
This brought him distress and torment 2 Peter 2:7,8.
 - The rich young man chose immediate benefit over eternal gain when he rejected the Lord's offer of eternal life and went away sorrowful. Luke 18:23-25
- This Chinese New Year, bless the next generation with a biblical worldview.