

Date : 11 February 2024
Theme : Chinese New Year
Topic : Praising God from Whom All Blessings Flow.
Key verse : Deuteronomy 28:2 "All these blessings will come on you and accompany you if you obey the Lord your God."

Introduction:

The most important word to the Chinese people during Chinese New Year is "Blessing" 福. Money can buy us many things, but cannot buy us health, harmony nor happiness. Blessing embodies every good thing that we can have to live a good life. We say "bless you" but do we really have the power to bless another? Where does blessing come from?

The Chinese race is a very blessed people, because Chinese characters are pictographic, giving meanings and many tell a story. The Chinese word for "Blessing" 福, itself tells a story about where blessing comes from. It is made of 3 parts: 礻 God, 一口 one mouth and 田 garden. This is the picture of the event when God created the first man Adam and placed him in the garden. Blessing is when we walk in loving relationship with God and He is with us in everything that we do. God is the only true blessing and only with God there is blessing.

Today we will consider the following 3 questions:

1. Where is God when we bless others?
2. How are God's blessings better?
3. How do we receive God's blessings?

1. Where is God when we bless others?

During Chinese New Year, most Chinese are familiar with using Chinese phrases to bless family members, relatives and friends. However, most of us are not conscious that God is in the picture when we bless others. We need to recognize that the words of blessings that we speak, are not just nice things that people like to hear, but that God is the true blessing who does them.

i. Joy & happiness

- 新年快乐 (xin nian kuai le) – Happy New Year
This is the simplest and most common phrase. Money can buy many things but it cannot buy happiness. Ecclesiastes 5:19 says that God who gives us the ability to enjoy good things and be happy in our work.

ii. Wealth and prosperity

- 恭喜发财 (gong xi fa cai). 年年有馀 (nian nian you yu). 财源滚滚 (cai yuan gun gun)
This is the favourite of most. No one will reject wealth. Deuteronomy 28:11 says that the Lord will grant "abundant prosperity".

iii. Health.

- 身体健康 (shen ti jian kang)
Health is wealth. Like joy, money cannot buy health. One cannot really enjoy a good life without health. In Exodus 23:25, the Lord said "I will take away sickness from among you"

iv. Protection, safety and peace.

- 出入平安 (chu ru ping an)
This is the exact blessing in Deuteronomy 28:6 which says "You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out."

v. Success in studies, career and business

- 学业进步 (xué yè jìn bù), 升官发财, (shēng guān fā cái), 生意兴隆 (shēng yì xīng lóng)
This is a blessing of success, promotion and productivity. Deuteronomy 28:13 says “The Lord will make you the head and not the tail.”

vi. Blessing our desires and all our plans.

- 心想事成 (xīn xiǎng shì chéng), 万事如意 (wàn shì rú yì)
These may seem quite unspiritual and excessive. But the Lord does them, demonstrating His abundance, generosity, and love for us.
Psalm 20:4 says “May He give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed.

2. How are God’s blessings better?

Many of us are in survival mode because we tend to depend on ourselves and everything else other than God. Often, after we have done everything else and then realise we have no other solution, do we desperately humble ourselves before God to cry out for His help.

i. God’s blessings have no strings attached.

Proverbs 10:22 “The blessing of the LORD makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it”.

- Unfortunately, people seek blessings from alternative spiritual means like fortune telling, occult, medium and even the devil. Instead of blessings, they reap curse upon themselves and their loved ones.

ii. God gives the ability to make wealth and be productive.

Deuteronomy 8:18 says “But remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth.”

- Many people say that they only believe in money, and seek created things and even people. But they are not seeking God the Creator and Blessor.
- Often, we forget that all the good things we have come from God. Skills, gifts, and talents are given by God.
- He is the one who gives us sight, speech and hearing, and will help us and teach us.
Exodus 4:11-12

iii. God abundantly blesses everything and everyone in the house.

- Joseph was slave under Potiphar but he prospered and had success in everything he did because Lord was with him.
 - The Lord used a slave, someone who has suffered injustice, to bless him and everything the Egyptian had.
 - Genesis 39:5 says “The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field.”
- Obed-Edom received the ark of covenant into his home from King David, despite the recent fearsome death of Uzzah because he touched the ark.
 - King David was unwilling to take the ark with him, but Obed-Edom was willing.
 - While the ark remained in Obed-Edom’s house for 3 months, 1 Chronicles 13:14 says “the Lord blessed his household and everything he had.”

3. How are we to receive God's blessings?

When we do not have the blessings, the opposite is true, we are under curse. Half of Deuteronomy 28 lists the blessings and another half lists the curses. Whether we come under blessings or curses is not mysterious, but God sets them for us and invites us to make a choice – blessings or curses, life or death. And God calls us to choose life and blessings. Deuteronomy 30:19.

Once we are certain about that, Deuteronomy 30:20 calls us to do 3 things:

i. Love the Lord your God.

- The basis of blessings and curses is on our relationship with God. Each of us need to decide if we would declare with our mouth “Jesus is the Lord my God”.
- It requires us also to love the Lord. Loving Him also involves our attitude, whether we are willing or unwilling. Jesus will not be the Lord of our lives if we are merely agreeing with our mouths but disagreeing in our hearts. We have to make a clear choice in our heart and with our mouth, if we would truly love Jesus as the Lord my God.
- Why should we love Him? Because He first loved us and gave Himself to us.

ii. Listen to His voice

- Blessings and curses are the result of our obedience to God. Listening to God's voice.
- Many are just hearing but not listening. Listening involves obedience.
- Many are not really hearing because we are present but our minds are wandering. We cannot obey when we are not hearing.
- Jesus will be the Lord of our lives when we simply call him Lord, but not do what He says.

iii. Hold fast to him.

- Holding fast means to hold on tightly to Jesus and His Words and not let go. The result is us obeying God fully and carefully and receiving the all the blessings that God has prepared for us whom He love.

Application

1. Consider Deuteronomy 30:20 carefully and respond to the Lord with the 3 steps.
 - The Lord promised in Deuteronomy 30:9-10 “The Lord will again delight in you and make you prosperous ... if you obey the Lord your God and keep his commands ... and turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”
2. When we speak blessings to relatives and friends, consciously believe and depend on God to bless them.