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A First Look at Blessing

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Genesis 1:26-28

This is a weird message to a really cool concept: Blessing. God's blessing. As a regional equipping center, we want our folks to know how to bless. To be equipped to be a true blessing in the world today. Over the next several weeks we'll look at Scripture as our guide to discovering the Blessing: The blessing we can be. How to bless others. We'll learn what God blesses. The elements of creating the blessing for the people around you. And the fact that many folks are going around today *without* it: The Blessing, that is.

Most of the time when we hear the word "blessing" we think of Grandma saying "Bless you, Honey!" Or we think of Thanksgivings, and the obligatory "blessing". From my wife Leigh, I learned that "Bless your heart!" is a great thing to say, especially when you don't know what to say. (It's sort of like "I'm sorry!" or "It stinks to be you right now!") Bless your heart! And we say "God bless you" when someone sneezes. (Why'd it take so long for someone to come up with the idea of sneezing into your elbow?) Then there's Kate Smith singing Irving Berlin's "God Bless America." At Dexter Little League I had to sing the National Anthem at the last minute, and this old guy told everybody "I haven't heard it sung that well since Kate Smith!" (I told those people I'm half the man she was. You can ask an old person what I mean...) ☺ After 911 we saw "God Bless America" everywhere! (Well, almost). I 'bout died at Pierce Elementary School in Birmingham dropping Hunter and Jillianne off a couple weeks after 911 when I saw the sign out front say "Bless America"... (with no "God" in it). I wanted to throw up. ☺ Obviously we don't understand what the blessing is. Blessing someone gets watered down to saying "Have a nice day." And some TV preachers teach that God blessing you means that nice house, a dream job, the perfect spouse, and no problems (*if you're faithful!*)

I think the idea of blessing is hard to grasp because it's *so* deep and *so* basic to the fabric of the universe. It's hard to see. When we try to focus on it we're like a fish trying to see what water is. A fish doesn't know what water is, till you take it out of the water! Because we're surrounded by it, we have a hard time seeing the basic blessing that we live in. **The fact is, we live in the midst of blessing...and a curse.**

Listen: Blessing is the first act God did, upon completing the creation. We're talking primordial movement here. We're talking basic fabric/DNA of the universe is blessing. "Blessed" is the way it's *supposed* to be. It's the invisible proof God gives us. Think about it: Hunger means there must be something called food. The loneliness you feel means there *must* exist somewhere a deeper connection. Lostness means you *must* be created to be found. The fact that the world doesn't seem right means there must be the possibility of a world that *is* right. It points us to an original blessing, an original righteousness you were created to live out. You may be wondering what your life is supposed to mean. You may be wondering what you were supposed to do. That longing points to the fact that you were originally created for meaning and purpose, adventure and *blessing*. (For more on this line of thought, see [Mere Christianity](#) by C.S. Lewis).

Here's what Scripture says: God blessed the animals on the 5th day and called it good, and on the 6th day it says this: Genesis 1:27 "So **God** created human beings in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 **God blessed them** and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. **Rule** over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every

living creature that moves on the ground."

God, who created the universe out of nothing-nothing, beyond time, space, and matter, set the universe up with intention. With momentum and purpose and blessing. You and I, made in God's image, can choose: either swim in the direction God intended, thus experiencing God's blessing, or we can go our own way, and pay the consequences. God *allows* that: You *can* choose your own way. Lots of people do. That's one of the biggest problems in Christianity. Lots of us seek to follow Christ *and* our own way. We end up swimming *against* the basic DNA-current of the universe God designed. If you're here, going your own way, and all along the way, you wonder why you struggle so much. Though everyone in Scripture who was blessed faced obstacles, difficulties, and enemies, they were able to do so because they were walking with God, rather than in the opposite direction.

All of us have been blessed in so many ways. **The problem becomes the curse we've inherited.** You know the story. God said "Enjoy the Garden and eat of all the vegetation except the one tree of knowledge of good and evil. Don't eat of it. I have my reasons. And the day you do, you will surely die." The minute Adam & Eve eat the fruit, they are struck with guilt and shame and intense regret, and they start hiding from God: the natural consequence of the curse. Then, God curses the serpent (Gen 3:14-15), as well as the ground. Thorns enter the universe (Gen. 3:17). The effects of the curse are the woman is sentenced to pain in childbirth and the man is condemned to earn his living by the sweat of his hard work. But in the midst of the serpent's curse is the promise: Genesis 3:15 "*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*" Bible scholars point to this as the first prophecy of the Messiah, and the first reference to the virgin birth, as it was normally seen to be the seed of the man, rather than the woman.

We don't talk much about cursing these days. But it's why we sing every year:

**"Joy to the World, the Lord is come,
let earth receive her King!
Let every heart prepare Him room,
and heaven and nature sing..."**

Hidden in the powerful 3rd verse (that gets left off of some of the Christmas albums):

**"No more let sins and sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground! (now you know the reference)
He comes to make His blessings flow
far as the curse is found..."**

As far as the effects of the curse can be felt, the power of God's blessing will reach even further.

Galatians 3:13 "*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." 14 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the non-Jews too, through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive [the blessing of] the promise of the Spirit.*"

Romans 5:18 "*Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all people, (the curse) so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all people. (the blessing) 19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, (the curse) so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.*"(the blessing).

For everyone who believes in Christ, "*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*" (Romans 8:1). What Scripture itself is saying is that by trusting in Christ you are blessed by God! The voice that condemns you is never God's voice. Once we were enemies of God, but now, being reconciled to God by the death of His Son, we are His friends, "*blessed by God.*" What a great change in our lives! It's nothing we *do*. It's what God does, through Christ, in us. What we do is go along with it! (You gotta try it!) Like swimming *with* the current.

There was a day when I was cursed. There was a day when I loved sin. I opposed God's will. (I thought I

was being sophisticated. I thought I was being original. I thought I was being true to myself.) But I've realized that's exactly the power of the curse! And it spills over into other people's lives. It's a MESS! But now, I *don't* love sin anymore. My best, is seeing and doing *God's* best. It's a constant surrendering to Him. And in Christ your soul is *blessed*, not cursed. It's a miracle of God's mercy. Where the curse of sin had been abundant, God's grace has been even more abundant. God, though you were angry with me, your anger is turned away! Now, Lord, you *comfort* me!

I may *be* poor, I may *be* scared. I may *be* suffering (from the effects of the curse), but I'm blessed! **I have been loved beyond all measure.** I have an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, that doesn't fade away! I may *be* weak and ill. But though my strength and my body is failing, "I am blessed," for by His grace, we will triumph over all. I may *be* living in fear right now, in the midst of a boatload of anxiety. Still, I am blessed. On Him I can cast my care. In Him you can receive deliverance from *all* your fears. (Truly the only thing we need fear is God). The blessing of God can overwhelm every distress you have: every affliction, every sin. Because you are blessed in Christ, you can be confident!

You might be saying "This is really spiritual mumbo-jumbo. This makes no sense. This is lame. And I would say if you are your own, then you're right. You'd *better* stick up for yourself. But if you are Christ's, the blessing comes when you allow Him to take care of you. "*The Lord's blessing is our greatest wealth; all our work adds nothing to it*" Prov. 10:22.

How can we know we're blessed? Because we can begin to see the curse for what it is: the consequence, the cumulative consequences of sin, piled high like a horrible debt.

You know you're also blessed when your sin finds you out, and you are ashamed. (My friend Wendy was great at forging names. One time I skipped school, okay I chose to be late coming back from lunch. I gave my note to the science teacher Mrs. Loupee, and I know she knew. I was trying to live out this supposed "freedom" but by God's blessing I was miserable.) We call that DISCIPLINE. It is the mark of God's blessing: that you can't enjoy sin the way you once did! ☺ When your sin makes you sore, when you sin makes you sick, when your sin makes you miserable, when your sin makes you stress out, thank God! It's one of God's greatest blessings. C.S. Lewis went as far as saying "Pain is God's megaphone." It's *better* to feel that way, so it can wean you from sin, rather than that something sweet making you a slave of sin forever.

In our church, we like to say "No perfect people allowed." But we also say "Because of Jesus, your past does not have to equal your future." Yes, we're all sinners. But until we begin to live out what that original blessing looks like, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are just spiritual babies, living under the delusion of the curse: that we *can't* be any better. (We miss a major part of the blessing when we don't grow in grace.)

This week, as you begin to count your blessings, take this as an invitation to move away from the distractions of the curse. Put away the childish thing you've been clinging to. This week, cling to Christ. Look for His blessings moment by moment. Begin to reclaim the blessing God intended for you. Maybe you *can't* envision what living in that blessing would look like yet. You can't *imagine* making major adjustments. Because the curse of sin is staring you down right now. But you don't have to. You simply have to trust in Christ for Him to dump His blessing into your life. Some of you received Christ a long time ago, and you keep *tasting* the blessing, but you don't live into it for very long because you keep falling back into the old habits of the curse that die hard. Imagine this many people being a conduit to the blessing of God in the world. The ground we could gain over the curse. The healing, the love, the miracles, and the blessing God wants to pour out in and through us. Won't you be an extension of God's blessing today?