

The Disciple's Personal Blessing

Do you want to be blessed by God? Is there joy in your service? Do you feel like there is something missing in your spiritual life? You are saved, but do you feel blessed? You have been called to serve, but do you sense the blessing of God on your ministry?

God blessed Adam and Eve because it was His desire to do so. Then they sinned. Although it is God's desire to bless us, He is holy and cannot bless disobedience. Thereafter nearly every time the word blessed is used in scripture, it is directed toward those who love and obey God.

Others can also be blessed through the obedience of His own (Genesis 39:5 states the Egyptian's house was blessed because of Joseph). Galatians 3:8-9

Yes, God can certainly bless us with material things, but the word itself deals with the spiritual - defined as hallowed, sacred, consecrated, holy, and bringing comfort or joy.

The very first psalm describes the blessed man as one whose delight is in the law of the Lord and who meditates on His law day and night.

In Matthew 5-7, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus did what this psalmist asked: He teaches the law of God to His disciples and describes how God blesses a godly character. Character does not define what you do, but who you are. These are not natural characteristics of every man. They are produced by the grace of God and are exclusive to the person who seeks after God - a person who is spiritually blessed.

G. Campbell Morgan explains these characteristics in his *The Gospel According to Matthew*.

- "poor in spirit" means truly subject, willing to be governed. There is a recognition of lack, but also a recognition of something that supplies the lack. Consciousness of a great need (poor in spirit) recognizes a great provision (the kingdom of God).
- The man "poor in spirit" mourns over his own sin, and thus will be comforted by the Holy Spirit of God.
- The meek are "obedient to the rule of the King; meekness is the submissive spirit, the spirit of true humility." Christ gave the perfect example (Matthew 11:29) for those who shall inherit the earth.
- Those that hunger and thirst after righteousness have a "Divine discontent with everything unlike God" and they shall be filled.

Morgan states that "upon the basis of that growth (the first four characteristics) there follow the virtues of the Christian life. Mercifulness - indicating service; purity of heart - indicating the inward condition; peacemaking - indicating the effect produced on others. Then crowning all, there is the great Beatitude, which illuminates the process of pain, and suffering, and persecution, through which men pass into this great character."

D. Martyn-Lloyd Jones says that "the Christian is a man, and the only man in the world, who is truly aware of his own limitations" (*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*). He says that the beatitudes start and end with "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" because "you belong to a

different kingdom. You are in this world; but you are not of it. You are among those other people, yes, but you are citizens of another kingdom."

The mother of Jesus was blessed because of her obedience. He tells His disciples (Matthew 13:16), "Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear". He tells Thomas (John 20:29), "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin" (Romans 4:8).

What does it mean to have the blessing of God on your life? Check out Psalm 119 for some answers. "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord! Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity; they walk in His ways" (verses 1-3).

The psalmist wants the blessing of God. In the first three verses, he speaks of "those" and "they" stating a general principle. In verse four, he changed from speaking of God as "the Lord" and "Him" and begins his prayers with, "You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently." Starting with verse five until the end of the psalm, his prayer is very personal using pronouns "You", "Your", "I", "me" and "my" - pledging to God the commitment of his heart.

We learn about God through His word - His Son Jesus Christ, the Living Word and His written word, the Bible. The disciple of Psalm 119 realizes the importance of God's words expressed in His precepts, testimonies, laws, commandments, judgments and statutes.

Charles H. Spurgeon, a respected 19th century British Baptist preacher, wrote a three-volume work on the Psalms called "The Treasury of David." In his preface to volume III, he says,

I have been all the longer over this portion of my task because I have been bewildered in the expanse of the One Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm, which makes up the bulk of this volume. Its dimensions and its depth alike overcame me....Other Psalms have been mere lakes, but this is the main ocean....This great Psalm is a book in itself; instead of being one among many Psalms, it is worthy to be set forth by itself as a poem of surpassing excellence. Those who have never studied it may pronounce it commonplace, and complain of its repetitions; but to the thoughtful student it is like the great deep, full, so as never to be measured; and varied, so as never to weary the eye...

I am captivated by every reading of Psalm 119 - discovering a new theme, another revelation of God and more depth of understanding of the heart of the man who wrote it. Although the psalmist may have been David (and Spurgeon was sure it was), many say the author cannot be known for certain. One thing we do know for sure. This man was led by God to write down the desire of his heart - to love God by learning, heeding and keeping His commandments.

There are many things revealed about God's nature. He is blessed, good and righteous. God's word is settled in heaven. His faithfulness endures to all generations. He established the earth and it stands. His righteousness is everlasting. His testimonies have been founded forever.

With all the revelations of how majestic God is, the psalmist knows Him as a personal God, for he says: You will enlarge my heart (32), You have caused me to hope (49); You are my portion (57); Your hands have made me and fashioned me (73), You have given me life (93), You Yourself have taught me (102) and You are near (151).

Men can look around them and see God's creation and should recognize His creative genius and power and worship Him (Romans 1:20-21). Many don't, though, because they do not relate to Him as a personal God. The Creator to them is distant and not accessible.

I can know many things about someone else. I can study his life and his accomplishments, but unless and until I have a personal relationship with that person, there are things about him I will never discover. For instance, the first American president I remember was Dwight D. Eisenhower, a five star Army General in WW II who served as Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe. He became President in 1953 and served until 1961. I respected and admired him, but I didn't know him personally.

Although my father also served in that war, he was known by few people outside his family. However, I knew him as no one else knew him. He introduced me to Christ and loved me. When he died at age 90, I knew I was the one he wanted with him. That made all the difference. My personal relationship with my father had a larger impact on my life than knowing everything I could ever learn about President Eisenhower.

You may be sure that God is sovereign, good and righteous and that His Son died so that whoever would believe on Him would become a child of His. Many people know this about God but they don't know God. Until you come to understand that He loves YOU personally, you will never feel blessed. In turn, you will not be able to bless others if you don't have the assurance in your life that God is personally interested in YOU.

Jesus said the greatest commandment was to love God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself. You must settle your relationship with God before you can love and serve others. People who love themselves in the wrong way - selfishly - only think of themselves. If you obey God, you will love yourself in the right way - a healthy love. Knowing that God loves you frees you to take your attention off of yourself and onto others.

Look once more at the seven statements the psalmist makes about his personal relationship with God. Notice the personal pronouns.

You shall enlarge my heart (32)

Moffatt paraphrases this verse, "I will obey thee eagerly as thou dost open up my life." The Maker of your heart knows how to enlarge your desire for Him.

The last stanza of "The Longer I Serve Him," by Christian hymn writer Bill Gaither is:

The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows.
The more that I love Him, more love He bestows.
Each day is like Heaven, my heart overflows.
The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows.

You have caused me to hope (49)

We hope because of God and God does not disappoint.

The good news of salvation runs throughout this psalm. The men of faith in the Old Testament were saved by grace through faith (see Romans 4:3, 5, 16, 18-22).

God's word in the Old Testament prophesied of God's salvation through the coming Messiah. His word in the New Testament recorded that salvation obtained through the miraculous birth, sinless life, sacrificial death and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. As the men of old (including this psalmist) believed God would deliver what He promised, men today look back upon that accomplished fact in history. The Son of God gives all believers "the hope of glory."

The hope the Psalmist had and the hope Abraham had is the same hope that we have. Eight times this psalmist mentions hope (43, 49, 74, 81, 114, 116, 147 and 166). "Lord, I hope for Your salvation, and I do Your commandments (v. 166).

You are my portion (57)

TEV (Today's English Version) - "You are all I want."

In Psalm 142:5, David said, "I cried out to You, O Lord; I said, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living." Before a follower of Christ enters eternity through death, while still living on the earth (the land of the living), he is constantly in need of help from God. He needs His protection (refuge) and he needs His guidance.

At one point in our ministry, Satan's attacks upon our family were so strong I nearly despaired. The verse God gave me during that time was Psalm 27:13, "I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." He did get us through it and I did once more become aware of the goodness of God. Had He not been "my portion" during that time, Satan would have won.

If God is your portion in this life, you have all you need. God is more than enough.

In heaven, I will not need refuge. Temptation, trials and despair will be no more. However, while we are still here in the land of the living, He must be our portion. Nothing else will do.

One commentator (John Field, 1882) said that "the believer's portion" is a "gift by covenant," "involved in joint heirship with Christ" and "confirmed by the experience of faith," stating that if you "meditate much upon God, under the conviction that he is your portion," you can "draw largely upon his riches to meet every need as it arises." - Treasury of David, page 456.

Your hands have made me and fashioned me (73)

"Your hands have made me, cunningly fashioned and established me" (Amplified). Man was God's special creation. From the dust of the ground God formed man and breathed life into his

nostrils (Genesis 2:7). He is also active in the formation of every soul who has ever lived (Psalm 139:13-16).

God made you, established a plan for your life and is molding you in the image of His Son.

You have given me life (93)

"I will never forget Your precepts, [how can I?] for it is by them You have quickened me (given me life) (Amplified). Some translations render given me life "revived me" (NASB).

"Did not He who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same One fashion us in the womb?" (Job 31:15) God is Creator of all, but not all are His children - quickened to life by salvation through Jesus Christ, revived from death to life. "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (John 5:24). "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:12).

Until one is born of the Spirit, he is the walking dead. "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned - (Romans 5:12) ..."so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5:21).

When sin entered the world, the devil told Eve, "You will not surely die." He lied. Death entered the world with that first sin. All men die once (Hebrews 9:27), but for those who do not accept Christ as Savior, there will be a second death (Revelation 20:13-15). "The last enemy that will be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:26).

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26). For believers, everlasting life begins at the moment of spiritual birth. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Psalm 116:15). The Bible calls the death of a believer "sleep". "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20).

You Yourself have taught me (102)

It is impossible to get more personal than "You Yourself." "You" is emphatic. God is the One who opens his eyes for him to see the benefit of His ways.

In our last session, we will look at the prayer requests of this psalmist. One of them is in verse 18: "Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law." Many times he asked the Lord to teach him. In this verse near the end of the psalm, we see the answer to his prayer.

You are near (151)

At the beginning of this session, we noted that many people think God is distant and unapproachable. This disciple knows differently. God is near - as close as his thoughts, his heart and his breath.

When my father was dying, I knew he wanted me to be near him. I didn't have to say much. In fact, he couldn't talk to me. He was on a breathing machine. The doctors told me that before I got there, he had been struggling. He had pulled out all the tubes and tried to get out of bed. He tried to fight the doctors. When he saw me, everything changed. He stopped struggling. He relaxed. His daughter that he loved was near him. That was all that mattered.

I know the value of feeling my Father's presence. I talk a lot to God, but not always. I just feel Him near me. I know if He needs to say something to me or I need to say something to him we can talk. All I really need to know is that He is near.

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When you communicate the gospel to others, it is important that you let them know God is personally calling them. His Spirit will draw them to Himself. You can be the one who introduces them to Jesus, but it is Jesus Himself who will love them like no one else can. Just as I have a personal relationship with each of my sons, God has a personal relationship with each of His children.

You cannot share what you do not have. There are many things I would like to share with you, but if I do not possess them myself, I cannot give them to you. Likewise, others can tell if you have a genuine relationship with God and feel His blessing. That relationship is the best testimony you have.

When you are sure of the love of God in your life, you can share it with others. God will use you as a mouthpiece and an example - just like He used this psalmist.

Personal Reflection

Can you now say that you feel blessed by God in your life...your ministry...your relationship with Him?

How has God blessed you personally? Do you feel His hand on your life? Is He guiding you?

Which of the personal reflections of the psalmist spoke to you the most and why?

1. You shall enlarge my heart
2. You have caused me to hope
3. You are my portion
4. Your hands have made me and fashioned me
5. You have given me life
6. Yourself have taught me
7. You are near

How does knowing that God loves YOU help you share the gospel with those who need to hear it? What can you tell others about His love?