

God's blessing

ODCC 00/00/09 (x.pages)

Text: Genesis 32:22-32

Introduction

1. If you look up the word “blessing” in a Bible concordance you will find hundred of places where it is used in both the Old and New Testaments.
 - a. It also has many meanings, e.g.:
 - i. “to speak well of” – we get our English word *eulogy* from this word where (usually) at someone’s funeral we extol their praiseworthy points.
 - ii. “to give thanks” – we say grace before we eat and grace is often called *the blessing*, and Paul speaks about the wine at communion and he calls it *the cup of blessing* (translated in the KJV but the NIV has *the cup of thanksgiving*) (1 Cor 10:16). One of the words used in traditional churches for communion is “the Eucharist” which is, again, is based on the word “bless”.
 - iii. “to give praise” – that’s one way we bless God, by expressing His goodness to us in every way.
 - iv. “to give” – we bless God when we give to God, and we bless others when we give (it may be money, or food, or time, or expertise).
 - b. But here in our text it is to receive a word that has power. It is the receiving a good promise that is guaranteed to come to pass.
 - c. It is the opposite of a curse!

Jacob's return to Canaan

1. In our text we find Jacob returning to Canaan after 20 years. He had fled from his brother, Esau, after stealing his birthright. Esau planned to murder Jacob and so he fled to his mother’s family living in Paddan Aram.
 - a. In Paddan Aram he worked for his uncle married 2 of his daughters and started a family of his own.
 - b. He worked hard and God prospered him and he became very rich until his in-laws became jealous.
 - c. Finally God instructed Jacob to return to Canaan, the land of his father.
2. The birthright that Jacob had stolen was the blessing of his father Isaac. Isaac had in turn been blessed by his father, Abraham, and Abraham had been blessed by God.
 - b. The blessing had power – it wasn’t just a nice wish – it was a promise, a covenant entered into between God and Abraham.
 - c. It was transferable: Abraham passed it on to his son Isaac because God had made the covenant with Abraham *and his seed (descendants)*.
 - d. Isaac should have passed it on to Esau the eldest of the twin boys but Esau had not shown any interest in the blessing.
 - e. Jacob on the other hand knew that it could only be carried through either line, his brother’s or his own, and he **desperately wanted** the promise and so devised a scheme whereby he bargained with his brother and deceived his father to get it.
3. Now Jacob was returning to the land of his fathers. The land was part of the blessing, it’s where he had to be.
 - a. But it’s also where his brother lived and he had to face his brother. What good was the blessing if his brother attacked him and killed him.
 - b. The day before he meets his brother, Jacob intends spending the night alone, presumably to pray and to commit his life and the lives of his family to God.

Jacob meets with God

1. Our text tells us that when Jacob had sent everything and everyone across the river, he was left alone and a man wrestled with him.
 - a. We cannot say for sure who this man was except he was no ordinary man and most Bible scholars from way back believe it was Jesus.
 - b. Jacob called that place *Peniel* (“the face of God) “because,” he said, “I saw God face to face.”
 - c. The **whole night** Jacob wrestled with this man. For Jacob it was the equivalent of a life or death struggle.

2. Jacob matched the man strength for strength. The man saw that he could not overpower Jacob (he was no easy pushover).
 - a. And at daybreak the man says to Jacob, "Let me go." But Jacob says, "I will not let you go unless you bless me!"
 - b. God began the struggle on His terms, but having successfully struggled, Jacob ends the struggle on his terms: "I will let you go after you bless me."

Three aspects

It seems to me that there are three things here: *Firstly*, there is the blessing; *Secondly*, there is the desire; and *Thirdly*, there is the struggle. Let's look briefly at each...

THE BLESSING

1. Whenever God commissions someone it is not essentially for the benefit of that person – it is always for the benefit of His Kingdom.
 - a. The person God commissions always has some attribute that is pleasing to God: • Abraham was a man of faith; • Moses was the meekest man that ever lived; • David had a heart after God; • Paul was extremely zealous for God; • Ruth was faithful to her mother-in-law and God; • Esther was prepared to put her life on the line, etc.
 - b. The common denominator is that all of them are FOR GOD and not for self.
 - c. The person God commissions does not enjoy a life of luxury and ease and many of them experienced incredible persecution and hardship and suffering...
 - d. but all of them have enjoyed the honour of serving their God. Paul said, *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day"* (2 Tim 4:7,8).

THE DESIRE

1. Esau cared little for the blessing until the time came to receive it. Hebrews reminds us, *"When he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears"* (12:16).
 - a. "Godless" is how Esau is described – he cared little for God, or the promises of God, or the plans of God.
 - b. There is a small window of opportunity in our lives to embrace God's way, to latch on with all our might to the blessing.
 - c. *There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat,
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.* [Brutus in Julius Ceaser (Act 4, Scene 3)]
 - d. If you don't like me quoting Shakespeare I'll quote Jesus: *"From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it."*

THE STRUGGLE

1. You would think that God would make it easy to walk in His blessing but not so. As we read from cover to cover every man and woman who served the purposes of God struggled.
 - a. In Jacob's case it even seems and if God opposes and Jacob has to fight with God to obtain the blessing.
 - b. Friends, it is like this so that in the end, it is the power of God that is manifested through our human weakness so that God is honoured and glorified.
 - c. God said to Paul, *"My strength is made perfect in your weakness."*
 - d. It seems to me that God delights in those who fight to obtain all the blessings He has. Those who do not give up easy. Those who know what they want and will not quit until they get it. Those who desire, more than anything else a blessing from God.
 - e. *"If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan?"* (Jer 12:5).

Jacob's name changed

1. God said to Jacob, *"Your name will not longer be Jacob but Israel."* Israel means **a Prince with God**.
 - a. The nation was known as the Israelites because they were the promised descendants of Jacob, the man who received the blessing of God.
2. And what was God's promise to Abraham? In part it was this: *"Through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed"* (Gen 22:15).
 - a. Then to whom does the blessing of God belong? The answer is, to you and to me.
 - b. I want the blessing of God upon my life, even in my old age I want more of God than I've ever had.
 - c. Paul promises this about God: *"To him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."* (Eph 3:20-21).
 - d. I have an imagination and I imagine what I desire to see God do. What I imagine is based in the promises – the blessing – of God.
 - e. I will struggle with God in prayer; I will not allow discouragement to dissuade me; I will not give up; I will not be satisfied with silence from heaven; I will content with God even as Christ taught until I get what God has promised.