

Blessings

Sometimes a blessing might come in the form of, what we might think is, a curse when we don't really understand the Lord's will for us. How often have we remarked when misfortune strikes that maybe it might be God punishing us for something? But could it actually be that there's some instruction to be learned from such a situation that will keep us from stumbling? Could it then be considered a blessing in disguise?

Rev 3:19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Have we ever prayed that God would look deeper into our heads, even though "all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do" (*Heb 4:13*)? Are we afraid He might not bless us if He found something amiss? Remember nothing can be hid from Him.

Psa 26:2 Examine (*Heb.974- investigate*) me, O LORD, and prove (*Heb.5254- test*) me; try (*Heb.6884- refine*) my reins (*Heb.3629- mind*) and my heart (*Heb.3820- understanding*).

Even the apostle Paul petitioned Christ to remove "a thorn in the flesh" that he soon found to be a blessing in disguise.

2Co 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. 8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. 9 And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I **take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses** for Christ's sake: for **when I am weak, then am I strong.** (*Emp. added*)

The negative things that life throws our way are often the very things that end up strengthening us and reinforcing our faith. We don't always know why certain things happen especially after we've been faithful to the Lord. Faithfulness should never become a bargaining chip to be cashed in for a blessing. That would make our salvation of less value and something we wouldn't need the blood of Christ to obtain.

Tit 3:4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6 Which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; 7 That being justified by His grace (*not our works*), we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Rom 11:5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 6 And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it be* of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

We cannot exchange grace for works! There's nothing we can do to merit our salvation because when it's all said and done we would have to ask ourselves "*which man-made works that we might be able to do will save us*" or "*is there a minimum of work I can do in order to be saved*"?

Our salvation comes without being merited and the things we do for Christ are things that we are expected to do anyway.

Luk 17:7 But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? 8 And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? 9 Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. 10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

So what are some of the blessings that a faithful Christian can expect from above?

Work

Pro 13:11 Wealth *gotten* by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.

Homelessness has increased in this area ever since a shelter, and other means to house and provide necessities for these people, was established a few years back. Were there that many homeless around before and this just indicated such shortages or is the shelter just a magnet that brought these folks from other areas once the word got out? Have you noticed the increase in the number of panhandlers lately? Are they legit or are they just playing on the sympathy of others while looking for a way to make an easy buck for their ill addictions? Do they really want to work? Can they give a reason for not looking for a job? Or are they simply just plain lazy?

Pro 20:4 The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; *therefore* shall he beg in harvest, and *have* nothing.

Ronald Reagan is credited with the saying: "I believe the best social program is a job...". When finding there were those who wouldn't work at Thessalonica, Paul admonished...

1Th 4:11 ... that ye study (*Gk.5389- labor, strive*) to be quiet (*Gk.2270- refrain from meddlesomeness*), and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; 12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and *that* ye may have lack of nothing.

He would later have to remind them...

2Th 3:10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that **if any would not work, neither should he eat**. 11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. 12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat **their own bread**. 13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.

Being always benevolent but always wise, we are to ever work for what we have in order...

Ecc 3:13 ... that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God. Because...

Play

...all work and no play can make anyone dull. We should enjoy the fruit of our labors but only as long as we don't forget from Whom we received these blessings in the first place.

Jas 1:16 Do not err, my beloved brethren. 17 Every good (*Gk.18- benefit*) gift and every perfect (*Gk.5046- complete*) gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

All blessings from God, whether physical or spiritual, anything that benefits the Christian while living on Earth can potentially go toward the spreading of the Gospel.

Friends/family

Psa 127:3 Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is* His reward. 4 As arrows *are* in the hand of a mighty man; so *are* children of the youth. 5 Happy *is* the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

Parents rewarded with an heritage of the Lord don't truly realize what a blessing they have in their children unless they experience the loss of a child or of one going (*or already gone*) astray. Whether our offspring are good examples of what we had hoped for or not, how often have we missed the opportunities to tell them we love them only to wish when a tragedy might strike that we would have set aside our busy schedules and other distractions to have reminded them even more? They are only young and therefore able to be molded once.

Jer 31:19 Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon *my* thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.

Regrets of having not done something good and right can be hard to bear.

Pro 27:6 Faithful *are* the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy *are* deceitful.

A true friend is one that admonishes us legitimately no matter how much it might hurt or how much his reproof might make enemies between us. And there are those who "claim" to be our friends, but often strive to know us intimately only to betray us when they can profit from our friendship through their deception. Even our Lord understood betrayal.

Mat 26:14 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, 15 And said *unto them*, What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.

Luk 22:47 And while He (*Jesus*) yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss Him. 48 But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?

How then should we respond to those who've become our enemies?

Enemies

Luk 6:27 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, 28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

When Saul persecuted the church she grew. Thus as an enemy the persecutor also served as a blessing.

Act 8:1 And Saul was consenting unto his (*Steven's*) death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Act 8:4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.

Understanding the persecution the Christians at Rome were facing, Paul later wrote...

Rom 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. 21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

To heap coals of fire on his head is another way of saying there's a possibility that exists where fighting fire with water will dampen our enemy's desire to harm us by appealing to his conscience. If there was ever a person down through history that would have been justified for having a vengeful spirit against others it would have been Christ against us. At one time, we were all "the enemies of the cross of Christ" (*Php 3:18*).

1Pe 2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: 22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: 23 Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed *Himself* to Him that judgeth righteously: 24 Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by Whose stripes ye were healed.

Life

The blessing of a life in Christ Jesus has many advantages to the faithful saint. It is an existence of hope. We understand the meaning of life in that there is a more joyous one beyond this physical reality. But in this present realm when we live a sanctified life devoted to God, when we truly understand the difference between good and evil through the study of His word and live accordingly, when our lives then demonstrate a giving up of self, only then can we understand what that conviction to the abundant life Christ spoke of can mean.

Joh 10:10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it more abundantly*. (*Emp. added*)

In this present existence of hope we understand also that we have been given a down payment toward the home that awaits us in the next life.

Eph 1:11 In Whom (*Christ*) also **we have obtained an inheritance**, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will: 12 That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ. 13 In Whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth,

the gospel of your salvation: in Whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ Which is the earnest (*Gk.728- a pledge, that is, part of the purchase property given in advance as a security for the rest*) of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory. (*Emp. added*)

Just as we pay a mortgage in order to one day own a home here, we also continue paying toward that home that awaits us there.

Col 3:23 And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; ²⁴ Knowing that **of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance**: for ye serve the Lord Christ. (*Emp. added*)

But in order to receive an abode in Heaven we need to cross over the spiritual Jordan.

Php 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and *my* hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but *that* with all boldness, as always, *so* now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether *it be* **by life**, or **by death**. (*Emp. added*)

Death

Psa 116:15 Precious in the sight of the LORD *is* the death of His saints.

How can death be a blessing? To God it means the blood of His Son has saved another precious soul from Hell. To the saint it ends his struggles on earth with the fear of failure to please God and the ultimate departure from Him because of our human nature to sin. And since death has with it a meaning of separation, it can also stand for the end of all temptations to sin.

Rom 6:7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

That's how death can be a blessing.

Rev 14:13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die **in** the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them. (*Emp. added*)

Our works that do follow us are what we do in this life that can go toward the conversion of others who in turn continue that Great Commission given by Christ to save the next generation. Such has been done in prior generations since Jesus first commissioned His disciples to reveal the plan of salvation to a lost and dying world. They have since died but the same Gospel that they spread then has continued since in the almost two centuries that followed.

Heb 11:4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he **being dead yet speaketh**. (*Emp. added*)

Not that we are to strive to be remembered or have memorials built in our honor either. We can't know the names of the generations of Christians that labored toward the goal of saving the then future saints of which we are a part. Whether we serve in the capacity of elders, preachers, deacons or other supporting materials that make up the structure known as the church of which

Jesus is the foundation, we all hope one day to stand at the judgment where all our labors will be rewarded.

1Co 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 13 Every man's work (*concerning evangelism*) shall be made manifest: for the day (*of judgment*) shall declare it, because it shall be revealed (*Gk.601- disclose*) by fire; and the fire shall try (*Gk.1381- to test; by implication to approve*) every man's work of what sort it is. 14 If any man's work (*conversions he had a part in*) abide (*be saved at the judgment*) which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

Dan 12:3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and **they that turn many to righteousness** as the stars for ever and ever.
(*Emp. added*)

These days it's difficult enough to convert people let alone keep them saved. The following verse shows how once a person puts Christ on in baptism the real work begins. It then becomes the work of every member of the congregation, not just the one that led them to Christ, in teaching them and to be an encouragement to them toward their walk as a newborn babe in Jesus.

1Co 3:15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

To suffer loss after all the personal and emotional work that went toward seeing a soul obey the Gospel message, and for that person to fall away, doesn't mean those involved in converting that person will be punished for losing them. Their work will be remembered at the judgment but the soul that is lost will not. They will receive their just due when told by Jesus Himself "I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity" (*Mat 7:23*).

Mat 3:12 Whose fan *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

"It seems that Christians reveal their true nature while they live their lives, and the ultimate or final revelation of their personality and works will be disclosed on the Day of Judgment. I understand the day in this verse to describe the coming Day of Judgment. At the judgment there will be no doubt as to whether Christians were like gold or hay." Brad Price

Therefore...

Col 3:2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, *Who* is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.

Finally

2Co 6:3 Giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed: 4 But in all *things* approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, 5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; 6 By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, 7 By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on

the right hand and on the left, 8 By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and *yet* true; 9 As unknown, and *yet* well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; 10 As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and *yet* possessing all things. (*...for we have inherited the earth!- Mat 5:5*)

What a blessing to spiritually own this world! How would you like to be so blessed?

#1. Have you heard?

#2. Do you believe?

Rom 10:14 How then shall they call on Him **in Whom they have not believed?** and how shall they believe in Him **of Whom they have not heard?** and how shall they hear without a preacher?

#3. Have you repented?

Luk 15:7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

#4. Have you confessed Jesus as the Christ?

Mat 10:32 Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father Who is in Heaven. 33 But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in Heaven.

#5. Have your sins been washed away?

Mar 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

#6. If you've done all these things, have you remained faithful?

Joh 15:10 If ye **keep** My commandments, ye shall **abide** in My love; **even as** I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love.

#7. Are you growing?

Eph 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, Who is the Head, *even* Christ:

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