

Be A Blessing

(Cadet and GEM Sunday, 2019)

⁶Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. ⁹As it is written: "They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever."

¹⁰Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God!"

A. A "blessing" is a gift given to draw the gifted (recipient) closer to the giver

1. "Blessing" occurs in the first chapter (Genesis 1:22) and the last chapter (Revelation 22:14) and over four hundred times in-between
2. The Hebrew word for "blessing" (*barakah*) means "to adore on bended knee"
3. The Greek words for "blessing" are *eulogia* (a sense of praise and plenty); and *makarios* (a sense of contentment, provision and freedom from cares)

B. It is time the family of God reclaim both the word and the practice

BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

A. God took the initiative and introduced his plan to save his world

"The Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country...and your father's house to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you...and all the families of the earth shall be blessed through you.'" (Genesis 12:1-3)

1. God's promise of blessing provided the building blocks for Abraham's life
2. This agreement meant the blessings Abraham received must be turned into blessings for others: he was blessed to be a blessing

B. God loves to bless His children

"Tell Aaron and his sons, 'This is how you are to bless them: The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace'" (Number 6:22-27).

1. Hebrew parents pass "God's blessing" along to their children and others...
2. Jesus "took children in his arms [and] blessed them" (Mark 10:14)

[Christ] "redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit" (Galatians 3:13-14)

THE CONTEXT

A. The Church practiced the principle of sharing (i.e., blessing one another)

B. In 2 Cor. 9:6-7, Paul introduces an agricultural metaphor to explain blessings

1. There are two kinds of sowing and giving: sparingly and generously
2. The basic principle of farming and blessing is "*You harvest in proportion to your planting*;" "*You'll be blessed as you bless*"

C. Paul outlines the (Biblical, Christian) principles for giving/blessing:

1. First, he says, it is an individual matter between you and God
2. Second, "*as you decided*" means making up our mind thoughtfully
3. Third, "*from the heart*" means it comes from our relationship with God
4. Fourth, Paul says it is to be voluntary, not coerced or pressured
5. Fifth, it must be done joyfully; graciously, abundantly, lit. hilariously

D. In 9:8, Paul says there is an immediate benefit - we will be blessed

1. Every believer will have the time, energy, money, or skills to bless
2. God will enrich us so we can become more like Jesus
3. We will always be able to depend on God's sufficiency

"Blessed are those who fear the Lord...wealth and riches are in their houses...they have freely scattered their gifts to the poor...God will lift them high in honor" (cf. Psalm 112)

E. In 9:10-11, Paul says a good farmer, depends on God from start to finish

1. A generous giver, like a good farmer, sows bountifully and reaps richly
2. A generous giver, like a good farmer, is a way of life; not a periodic event

F. God responds by abundantly blessing those who bless

"Freely you have received, freely give..." (Matthew 10:8)

"It is more blessed to give than receive" (Acts 20:35)

THE CHALLENGE

A. The Promised Land, Israel, has two seas

1. The Dead Sea has only one opening to receive water, but it has no outlet
2. The Sea of Galilee is always giving what it receives; it is always flowing

B. The Challenge: Always live like the Sea of Galilee - always receive [from God] and always give [to others]. Live blessed to be a blessing