Every Good Gift - Part 1

Blessed with A Burden

(2 Kings 20:1-11)

Welcome to Christ’s Community Church, we are beginning a brand-new message series today entitled “Every Good Gift,” talking about the power of thankfulness. You see, most of us want the blessing of God, many of us pray for it, but I believe the majority of us have a limited perspective of what it is. And so, what I want to do in this series is to look at the gifts God has given us so that we are able to cultivate a deeper life of gratitude.

Now, I wonder how many of you would say that you want to be blessed? If you want God to bless you just raise your hand. This isn’t a trick question, if you want God to bless you raise your hand.

And so, most of us want to be blessed and what we are really saying is that we want to have everything that we want. Not necessarily what we need, but what we want, and so we want to be blessed with what? Maybe a higher paying job, a new car or truck, or maybe that dream house, without considering the strings attached. You know like longer hours, increased responsibilities, the higher maintenance costs and insurance premiums, etc. And so, for many of us when we say, “I want God to bless me.” What we are really saying is that we want the latest and greatest, we want to be completely self-sufficient, financially independent, so that we don’t have to depend on others or maybe even to depend on God.

The resulting problem with this perspective is that so many people live their lives with the goal of being blessed, or you could say being self-reliant, and yet deep inside they have this gnawing sense that something just isn’t right, that there has got to be something more, because even though outwardly they may have been blessed, inwardly they are longing for more. And so, maybe we have the wrong perception of what it is to be blessed because the Bible says,

“Be content with what you have… God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).

And so, there is something about the presence of God and in this series, I want to explore a more biblical perspective of what it means to be blessed, so that together we learn the secret of being content in any and every situation. In fact, I believe some of you are going to be surprised because we’re going to discover some very real blessings that we have not thought of or recognized as blessings before.

If you’d like to follow along in your Bible, would you turn to the New Testament book of James, because I want to show you something that you may find to be very surprising. This is the first blessing that I want to explore in this series because our prayer is often, “God bless me,” and yet the Bible says in James chapter 1, verse 12 says,

“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial (Or other translations say, “Blessed is the man who endures temptation, patiently enduring testing or trial”), because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him” (James 1:12).

In other words, we are blessed when we persevere, when we endure, when we stand fast, because God’s goal for our lives is maturity. He wants our lives to be fruitful, he wants our lives to be blessed, and so he says in Hebrews chapter 10,

“You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised” (Hebrews 10:36).

And so, the Spirit of God tells us, “Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial” because he cannot build our character without our cooperation.

That’s why we’re called to surrender to him, yielding to him and allowing him to be Lord of our lives so that he can accomplish his work in our lives. You see, God is building character into us long before he calls us into his service. In fact, God spent decades working in Abraham before he was able to give him his promised son. He worked in Joseph’s life for over 10 years in Egypt allowing him to face trials of many kinds before he put him on the throne. And even Moses went through 80 years of preparation before embarking on 40 years of ministry in the wilderness. And so, God must do his perfect work in us before he can work through us, but he won’t force himself, he won’t work in us without our consent, we must submit to him.

You see, God’s work in our lives is mysterious and behind-the-scenes and he allows various trials or burdens in our lives because he loves us and wants to keep us from disobeying him and losing his blessing. King Hezekiah’s life in second Kings chapter 20 is a great example of the behind-the-scenes ministry of the Spirit of God. He was a godly king, but he needed to be humbled because the Bible says,

“Hezekiah's heart was proud and he did not respond to the kindness shown him; therefore, the Lord's wrath was on him and on Judah and Jerusalem” (2 Chronicles 32:25).

And so, God disciplines those that he loves, not as a taskmaster or judge, but as a loving father working to bring out the very best in his children. I want to share with you today from the life of King Hezekiah and I pray that you can feel the spirit of the text and the power of the text because I believe the principle behind it is extremely important. My prayer is that we would walk faithfully with God over all that stands between us and our destiny as God is blessing us and working to conform us to the image of his son Jesus Christ.

As we turn to second Kings, chapter 20, we find that King Hezekiah reigned during a tumultuous time in history when Assyrian armies were invading the Middle East again and again and again. During his reign Hezekiah had shown great zeal for the Lord, restoring worship in the temple, and so when Assyrian forces drew near, threatening Jerusalem, Hezekiah immediately turned to God for help. God moved on behalf of his people, conquering the enemy, but it was in those days that the Bible says,

“Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death” (2 Kings 20:1).

And so, Hezekiah was laid up in the bed, sick and afflicted, when the prophet Isaiah went to him and said,

“This is what the Lord says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover" (Isaiah 38:1).

Now, the very fact that the prophet Isaiah came to him with this warning indicates the seriousness of the king’s condition. And of course, the word of the Lord crushed him, breaking his heart, so that he was burdened and unable to eat. But Hezekiah did what he could do and he could still pray, and so he determined to seek God, to pray and to keep praying until he got his breakthrough. So, he took that burden, and the Bible says,

“Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord” (2 Kings 20:2).

He turned away from those in the room and he appealed to God. He had no idea what to do, his life was being taken away, and so he prayed believing that if God didn’t do something he wasn’t going to survive. He appealed to the Lord, sounding somewhat boastful, but in accord with the Old Testament Law which required a godly righteousness of life. He said,

“Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly” (2 Kings 20:3).

He was broken and confused, trying to understand how this could be happening, but God was working. The Bible says that before Isaiah even got out of the building, the word of the Lord came to him again,

“Go back and tell Hezekiah, the leader of my people, 'This is what the Lord, the God of your father David says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you. On the third day from now you will go up to the temple of the Lord” (2 Kings 20:4-5).

For Hezekiah everything in his life had been turned upside down, everything was destabilized, and that which he normally depended upon was gone. Now it was just him and God and you could imagine at this point Hezekiah is on edge, he can feel every nerve in his body, he has goosebumps, his hair is standing on end because there was a shift coming into that room.

The gift of God was about to be poured out; Hezekiah is about ready to cross over into another dimension in his walk with the Lord. Everything in his life is getting ready to shift, this was a prophetic word for someone on the brink of transition, and God is getting ready to bring him into a spiritual place he’s never been before. God was about to turn his mourning into gladness, giving him comfort and joy instead of sorrow. And so, Hezekiah is going to have to wrap his mind around this because this is something new, the former things have passed away, yesterday is gone, and this is a new season. God said,

“I will heal you. On the third day from now you will go up to the temple of the Lord” (2 Kings 20:5).

There was a shift coming, Hezekiah would cross over the threshold of the temple. In three days, he’s going to be healed, he’s going to be a new person, because God is bringing the new out of the old.

Now, we’ve got to understand that King Hezekiah wasn’t a young man, he was about 40 years old, and so he wasn’t just trying to figure out who he is, he wasn’t wondering if he has what it takes to be king. But he was 40, he didn’t even know what old is yet, he hadn’t even thought about getting ready for the grave when all of this happened. This had been a complete shock but God was preparing to bless him in a way that was so much bigger than what Hezekiah had ever experienced. He said,

“I will add fifteen years to your life…" (2 Kings 20:6).

And you could just imagine Hezekiah’s response, his mouth was probably hanging open, his eyes were about the size of ½ dollar, because God was about to bless him beyond what he had ever imagined. God saw his faith, he recognized his integrity, and he knew that he was willing to go deeper because he was intentional about being in the purpose of God, and so a whole other chapter was about to be added to his life.

The Bible says, Isaiah hadn’t even gone out of the palace when God told him to return to the king and tell him that the Lord would heal him in three days and that he would add 15 years to his life. But not only that, he says,

“I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city for my sake and for the sake of my servant David" (2 Kings 20:6).

In other words, all of the weeping and praying trying to get God to change his mind and the plan of God had already been unraveling. God’s like I’ve got this, I will deliver you, I’ve got you in your bed, in the hospital, in your marriage, in your weakness, because my power is made perfect in weakness. I won’t forsake you. I won’t run out on you when you are up against the wall. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of your enemies.

I love this because this is a promise from heaven, Hezekiah can lean on this, the devil can’t take this away from him. God had a plan and a purpose, and no sickness can stop his agenda, death couldn’t hold him back, and it doesn’t matter how big the Army is because God is God. And so, Hezekiah had a promise from God, he’s not going to have to fight for it, all he needed to do was stretch out his hands and receive what God was getting ready to do. Because the Bible says in James chapter 1, verse 17,

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:17).

And so, it’s coming, he’s going to have to catch it, because there is no shifting, no changing, and right now Hezekiah is in the safest place in the whole wide world. Because when you get in the purpose of God, he will protect you to protect his interests, he will protect you to carry out his purpose, and “we know” the Bible says, “that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). He will make it work out all right, he says, “Hezekiah I will heal you, I will fight your enemies for you, because you’re living according to my purpose.” And so, God knows that he can count on Hezekiah, he knows that he will do what he tells him to do, and therefore his enemies have become God’s enemies, his battles have become God’s battles.

King Hezekiah was blessed, he wasn’t perfect, but he saw the deliverance of God because he had been called according to God’s purpose. The Bible says it this way in James chapter 1, verse 12,

“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him” (James 1:12).

Hezekiah was blessed with a burden, he persevered under trial, he stood the test and was approved. Even though he wrestled with pride, and struggled with a deadly disease, God saw him through. God drove back his enemies, he healed his body, and he strengthened him in his old age.

I wonder how God has blessed you today? You know, what it is that he has called you to patiently endure? My prayer is that you would be able to identify what God has allowed in your life so that you would see it as a blessing and that you would seek him and fulfill his purpose. You see, as a follower of Christ you have the heart, the character, and the nature of God in you and so when you see something that breaks your heart, or something that makes you angry, or maybe something that you really care about that other people just don’t seem to, it’s because there is a purpose that is bigger than you.

If you’re familiar with the book of Nehemiah, Nehemiah is a great example, because God will often bless you with a burden that he wants you to do something about. And so, Nehemiah was blessed with a burden for Jerusalem and God used him to rebuild the walls, protecting his people.

Or a more contemporary example would be Martin Luther King Jr. He was so disturbed by racism that God used him to help change the course of our country. Admittedly, we‘ve still got a long way to go, but it broke his heart to see one group of people treating another group of people so horribly simply because of the color of their skin. It became such a burden to him that he couldn’t stand it, he had to do something about it, and he did.

In the same way, God will bless you, entrusting you with something, some cause, some area, where he wants to empower you to make a difference.

What is it that breaks your heart? What is the burden that God has blessed you with? I want you to think about that and pray about that so that you can embrace your burden, let it overwhelm you, and allow it to move you emotionally. In other words, don’t try to ignore it, but learn more about it, and allow it to move you to action.

That’s what happened to the prophet Isaiah when he was a young man, it’s recorded in chapter 6, and he begins by saying,

“In the year that King Uzziah died…” (Isaiah 6:1).

And so, that is the backdrop, King Uzziah, one of Judah’s greatest leaders had died and all of the people were distraught. Isaiah himself was greatly distressed because his beloved King had died, the nation was in a turmoil, and there was very little he could do about it. But he did do what he could do, and he began seeking God, because even though Uzziah was no longer on his throne, the King of Kings and Lord of lords was still seated on the throne of heaven. And so, Isaiah was praying, and he says,

“I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple” (Isaiah 6:1).

Things may not have looked very good from the perspective of the people of Judah, but the vision of the Lord on his throne and the sound of worship in heaven brought great conviction to Isaiah’s heart. Confessing that he was a sinner, he cried out,

"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty” (Isaiah 6:5).

Isaiah was so burdened, so overwhelmed by this vision that he didn’t know what he was going to do, but he recognized that his life would never be the same, and he allowed the revelation of God to move him to action. His burden for the people of Judah was too much for him not to do anything because his eyes had seen “the King, the Lord Almighty.”

I wonder if there are any of you here today who are blessed with a burden and you would be willing to allow it to ruin you like Isaiah did? Something near and dear to your heart that overwhelms you in such a way that you have to do something about it. If you’ve got a burden, I want to encourage you to let it move you like Isaiah did when he heard the voice of the Lord saying,

“Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" (Isaiah 6:8).

In other words, now that Isaiah had seen what he has seen and knows what he knows, he can’t sit by and do nothing. He said, “Hear am I,” I’ve got to do what God calls me to do, and so he said, “Send me!” Because he couldn’t stand it anymore, he had to do something about it, he was ruined in the most holy and righteous way because God had blessed him with a burden.

I want to encourage you to let God bless you, let the heart of God overwhelm you, let that burden ruin you and move you to action.

It was many years later when Isaiah gave King Hezekiah two great promises from God. Isaiah told him that he would be healed, he would rise up out of his bed, and that he would worship at the temple in three days. And then, secondly, he said if the Assyrians returned, the Lord would defend the city. Hezekiah replied in verse eight,

“What will be the sign that the Lord will heal me and that I will go up to the temple of the Lord on the third day from now?" (2 Kings 20:8).

“Isaiah answered, "This is the Lord's sign to you that the Lord will do what he has promised: Shall the shadow go forward ten steps, or shall it go back ten steps?" (2 Kings 20:9).

He said, don’t forget to turn your clocks back. No, he said,

"It is a simple matter for the shadow to go forward ten steps," said Hezekiah. "Rather, have it go back ten steps" (2 Kings 20:10).

And then to assure Hezekiah of the truth of these promises,

“The prophet Isaiah called upon the Lord, and the Lord made the shadow go back the ten steps it had gone down on the stairway of Ahaz” (2 Kings 20:11).

As the sun went down, the shadow would naturally get longer, but suddenly, the shadow became shorter. Did God reverse the movement of the planet Earth or simply cause the shadow itself to go back on the steps? He doesn’t explain his miracles, but Hezekiah and the people of God were blessed, and we too can be thankful for every good gift.

Let’s pray together

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November 07, 2021

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*Graphics, notes, and commentary from LifeChurch, Ministry Pass, PC Study Bible, Preaching Library, and Sermon Central. Scripture from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.*