

His Great Blessings

By Kris Groda

The first blessing in the Bible conferred upon man is quite different from what one might normally consider a blessing. When God created man, He “blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth’ ” (Gen. 1:28). Man was blessed to: procreate, subdue the earth, and exercise dominance over animal life. It sounded like a commission and a privilege, but with this blessing also came a responsibility.

Typically, the idea of a blessing has three prominent applications in scripture. First, there is the idea of sanctioning a thing as when God “blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it. . . .” in Genesis 2:3. Second, there is the idea of expressing approval of or wishing prosperity or success upon an individual verbally, such as the patriarchal deathbed or covenant blessing. When Isaac was blessing Jacob (unknowingly), this blessing in the Israelite culture was basically the passing of the clan’s leadership torch and was considered a legally binding will (Gen. 27). Third, there is the reception of gifts as illustrated by the production of crops (Isa 65:8) or the presence of the dew of heaven, an important commodity for sustaining crops between rains (Gen. 27:28,39; Deut. 33:13).

For the most part, Christians tend to recognize God’s blessings in two categories – physical and spiritual. Relative to God’s physical blessings it should be noted that God “maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matt. 5:45). When speaking to the men of Lystra, Paul credited God who “did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:17). When Paul instructed the church at Corinth about collecting money for the saints (1 Cor. 16:2), he caused them to understand that it was God who prospered them. Unlike the rich fool, having a job, managing money and turning a profit is ultimately one of God’s great material blessings and should cause us to be rich towards God (Luke 12:15-21; Jas. 1:17). In connection with this, James reminds his readers that it would be presumptuous to think of making any plans without God’s ultimate approval, especially in regard to our own physical prosperity (Jas. 4:13-15).

Spiritual blessings on the other hand, are found only in Christ (Eph. 1:3). The message of salvation and the hope for the world in Christ was always in the mind of God so God promised Abram, “And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great . . .” (Gen. 12:2-3; 22:17-18). The fulfillment of this wonderful promise was Christ (Gal. 3:14-16). All the earth has been blessed by Christ because of His love and sacrifice for the world (John 3:16). Peter said to those Jews at the Temple, “Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities” (Acts 3:25-26). The message of repentance and salvation and all the perks of prayer, protection, providence, and a promised inheritance are all the great blessings of God in Christ.

What does this mean for me? Like Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:28), God has blessed us and with that comes certain responsibility. We are to bless others with the message of the Gospel (Matt. 28:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:2). God has called us to be a blessing to others through our words and

actions; to “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matt. 5:44; cf. Jas. 3:8-10). Finally, if we sing the song of the psalmist, we will also bless the Lord and His holy name with “. . . all that is within me. . . .” and “. . . forget not all his benefits”(Ps. 103:1-2). Let us praise God from whom all *great* blessings flow!