

Two Principles

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How can we be blessed? How can we have God's spiritual blessings poured out in our hearts and lives?

The two big principles for receiving blessings are:

- 1) We generally only receive as much grace as we think we need (and)
- 2) God generally treats us in the same way that we treat others

Let's start with some verses from the Sermon On The mount that illustrate these principles:

Matthew 5:3-9 MKJV *Blessed are the poor in spirit! For theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. (4) Blessed are they that mourn! For they shall be comforted. (5) Blessed are the meek! For they shall inherit the earth. (6) Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness! For they shall be filled. (7) Blessed are the merciful! For they shall obtain mercy. (8) Blessed are the pure in heart! For they shall see God. (9) Blessed are the peacemakers! For they shall be called the sons of God.*

Here Jesus connects receiving blessing with:

- A) Having a strong need or desire for blessing (those who mourn, those who are poor in spirit, and those who hunger and thirst after righteousness)
- B) Treating other people well (the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers)

In stark contrast, those who do not fervently seek after God, are not blessed:

James 4:2 MKJV *You desire, and do not have. You murder, and are jealous, and cannot obtain. You fight and war, yet you have not because you ask not.*

And those who treat others rudely and harshly have their prayers hindered:

1 Peter 3:7 HCSB *Husbands, in the same way, live with your wives with understanding of their weaker nature yet showing them honor as co-heirs of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.*

So if we want spiritual blessings we should press into them with some intensity, feeling poor and needy and hungering and thirsting after the things of God. There is

a necessary sense of emptiness, lowliness and desperation. We need to cry out to God.

James 4:6 MKJV *But He gives more grace. Therefore He says, God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.*

Spiritual pride is a great danger because we think we have it all or know it all and once that happens our ability to be blessed is very limited:

1 Corinthians 4:7-10 HCSB *(7) For who makes you so superior? What do you have that you didn't receive? If, in fact, you did receive it, why do you boast as if you hadn't received it? (8) Already you are full! Already you are rich! You have begun to reign as kings without us--and I wish you did reign, so that we also could reign with you! (9) For I think God has displayed us, the apostles, in last place, like men condemned to die: we have become a spectacle to the world and to angels and to men. (10) We are fools for Christ, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonored!*

In the above verses Paul is being very sarcastic. He is punching holes in the spiritual pride of the Corinthian church which was going around saying things like: "we are kings, we are full, we are rich, we reign!" Paul points out their folly and his neediness.

Earlier Paul had dealt with their intellectual pride:

1 Corinthians 3:18-20 MKJV *(18) Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool so that he may be wise. (19) For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God; for it is written, "He takes the wise in their own craftiness." (20) And again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain."*

A vessel that thinks that it is full cannot be further filled. If you want blessings you must so intensely realize that you need those blessings that you cry out in desperation for them:

Mark 10:46-52 MKJV *And they came to Jericho. And as He with His disciples and a large crowd went out of Jericho, blind Bartimeus, the son of Timeus, was sitting by the side of the highway, begging. (47) And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me! (48) And many warned him that he should be quiet, but he cried a great deal more, Son of David, have mercy on me! (49) And Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. And they called the blind man, saying to him, Be of good comfort; rise up, He is calling you. (50) And casting away his garment, he rose up and came to Jesus. (51) And answering Jesus said to him, What do you desire that I should do to you? The blind man said to Him, My Lord, that I may see again. (52) And Jesus said to him, Go, your faith has healed you. And instantly he saw again, and he followed Jesus in the way.*

The second principle is that, generally speaking, God treats us as we treat others. He shows mercy to the merciful and so on.

Matthew 5:7 MKJV *Blessed are the merciful! For they shall obtain mercy.*

James 2:13 MKJV *For he who has shown no mercy shall have judgment without mercy, and mercy exults over judgment.*

Luke 6:36-38 MKJV *Therefore be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. (37) Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven. (38) Give, and it shall be given to you, good measure pressed down and shaken together and running over, they shall give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you measure, it shall be measured to you again.*

Abundant blessings are poured out on the kind, the generous, the merciful and the forgiving!

In Matthew's gospel (Matthew 18;21-35) Peter asks about how often he should be forgiving and merciful. Jesus replies 'seventy times seven' - in other words, all the time, just as God forgives us. Jesus then goes on to tell the terrifying parable of the Unmerciful Servant whose appalling conduct gets him handed over to the torturers by the King. Hard-hearted people receive no blessing at all, rather they end up in spiritual torment.

Some may say: Now isn't this 'works' and how can it be by faith? Let us look at the process as a whole. We receive freely by faith and we give freely as a result of that faith, and as we give freely from faith more blessings flow back in to us and then we can give back out again.

Matthew 10:8 MKJV *Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. You have received freely, freely give.*

At no point did we receive the blessing because we were 'good'. We received the blessing because we asked and thirsted and cried out and because after we received it we then acted in faith so as to pass it along to others also.

If God gives to us freely and we decide to keep it inside and never share it, or if we think we have no need of His free gift in the first place, then the whole faith-filled process stops in its tracks. We receive freely by faith and we give freely by faith treating others with the same gracious freedom that God has blessed us with. That is only just and fair and right. We are blessed to be a blessing.

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