

The Blessing Of The Lord

*How the power of the blessing can change our lives
and impact our world.*

Rev. M. A. Erickson /Copyright © 1993, 2008, 2010

Contents

1. [The Power Of God's Blessing](#)
2. [The Blessing Of The Lord And Surrender](#)
3. [Faith And The Blessing](#)
4. [Christ And The Blessing](#)
5. [Strength From The Lord](#)
6. [The Blessing Of The Spirit](#)
7. [A Channel Of Blessing](#)
8. [The Blessing Of The Lord And Prayer](#)
9. [The Blessing Of The Lord And Holiness](#)
10. [The Blessing Of The Lord And Repentance](#)
11. [The Blessing Of Peace](#)
12. [Blessing In The Midst Of Trouble](#)
13. [Blessing And Increase](#)

14. [The Blessing Of The Lord Upon The Next Generation](#)

15. [Reversing The Curse: Overcoming Negativism](#)

16. [The Blessing Of The Lord On Our Finances](#)

17. [The Spirit And The Church](#)

18. [More Areas Of Blessing](#)

19. [Eternal Blessing](#)

20. [The Path Of Blessing In The Psalms](#)

[Conclusion: Toward The Full Measure](#)

[Scripture Guide](#)

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CHAPTER 1

The Power Of God's Blessing

What does it mean to have God's blessing on your life? This is a question every individual needs to ask. The implications are enormous, once you understand what God's blessing really involves. The blessing of God is powerful and life-changing, while the loss of God's blessing is more serious than we have probably imagined. It will be fruitless to attempt to do something – even something great and noble - if the blessing of the Lord does not rest upon it. Yet *with* the blessing of the Lord, even our small steps of service will be taken far beyond what we could accomplish by our own effort alone. Every individual has gifts that God intends to use. Accompanied by His blessing, these gifts can have a powerful impact.

The blessing of the Lord is given for a mighty purpose. We will examine the purpose behind the blessing of the Lord, as well as a number of the outcomes of his blessing. The blessing of the Lord is transforming, and is centered on Christ. The blessing of the Lord is not for selfish purposes - it is to touch the needy and the hurting, and to bring honor and praise to God. "Praise God from whom all blessings flow; praise Him all creatures here below!" is a familiar doxology in many parts of the world. As we understand and experience the power of His blessing, may our lives bring glory to the source - the living God.

The power of God's blessing is seen in God's original promise to

Abraham. God told Abraham, "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you shall be a blessing.... And all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen.12:2,3b, NIV). God promised Abraham a blessing so powerful that it was going to impact all the nations of the earth! The dynamic reality of the blessing of the Lord is that wonderful, and that powerful. The power of God's blessing is continuing on today, and each of us can become a partaker and an instrument of His blessing.

When God later renewed the promise of blessing to Abraham, He promised that through Abraham and his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen.22:16-18). Christ is referred to as the seed of Abraham (Gal.3:16). Christ is the seed of Abraham, through whom all the nations on earth would be blessed. So through Abraham, and ultimately through Christ, the blessing of the Lord would flow to all the nations of the earth. The blessing of the Lord is indeed one of the great, overarching themes of the Word of God.

Jesus Christ is the life-giving Son of God, who brought God's blessing to this earth. He took the curse of sin upon Himself, on the cross. He became a curse for us (Gal.3:13) so that we, as undeserving people, could receive the blessing of forgiveness and the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit. The blessing of the Lord is supremely fulfilled in Christ, and the giving of the Holy Spirit.

The blessing of the Lord is a powerful reality. God's blessing is able to transform our lives, bringing peace, strength and guidance by the work of the Spirit of God. The power of God's blessing can carry us over difficulties, and make a path of provision for us in the wilderness. Even if there are difficulties in our lives, the blessing of the Lord can carry us through with surprising victory.

The blessing of the Lord is supernatural, and can carry us over trouble and unknown dangers. His blessing can carry us through

difficult times, and cause all things to work together for our good. There is power in the blessing of the Lord; the Word of God has much to say on the subject. In each chapter we will investigate one of the dimensions of the blessing of the Lord, from the Word of God.

The blessing of the Lord is not given to make all of us wealthy, in a materialistic sense. Setting our hearts on material things is in fact a great hindrance to the blessing of the Lord. God has promised to provide for us; but our hearts must be set on His kingdom and His presence, and not on material things.

The crucial importance of the blessing of the Lord in the Scriptures is seen in the fact that without His blessing we would have nothing. Without God's blessing we could not receive forgiveness for our sins, since forgiveness is a dimension of the blessing of the Lord (Romans 4:6-9, Psalm 32:1,2). Without God's blessing it would be impossible to turn away from sin. Why? Because Jesus was sent, "to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways." (Acts 3:26). His blessing empowers us to turn from sin. Without God's blessing we would not have the Holy Spirit, since the gift of the Holy Spirit is spoken of as the fulfillment of God's promise of blessing, that would flow out to all the earth (Gal.3:14, Acts 2:17). *

Without God's blessing we would not have the possibility of eternal life, since the word spoken to God's people on the judgment day is: "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34, NASB). For God has commanded the blessing, even life forevermore (Psalm 133:3). The reality and transforming power of the supernatural blessing of God is linked to many major truths in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation.

The blessing of the Lord will make all the difference in our walk

with the Lord. We must expect and depend on the blessing of the Lord. We must also remove every hindrance to His blessing. As Watchman Nee said, "Today it should be our main concern so to live that God will not have to withdraw His blessing. On the one hand we must learn to rely upon it; on the other hand we must learn to deal with everything that would hinder it." (Twelve Baskets Full, Vol.2, p.52, Church Book Room, Hong Kong, 1966.). It is vitally important that we learn to walk in all of the dimensions of the blessing of the Lord, because God is looking for a yielded, praying people, who will be instruments of His blessing to bring healing to a needy world.

The power of God's blessing is able to impact nations, and bring revival. The blessing of Christ is intended to turn people's hearts from sinful ways, and to turn them back to God (Acts 3:26). This is a crucial purpose of the blessing of the Lord upon our lives: to bring spiritual revival and renewal that will turn multitudes of people to God.

As God's people we have allowed the blessing of the Lord to slip from our hands; the blessing of the Lord has been lost many times, through compromise, strife and sin. It is only in humbling ourselves, prayer, and repentance that the blessing of the Lord can be restored. We must return to God's ways and to holiness, to see God's blessing restored to the church and our nation. Holiness safeguards the blessing of the Lord, so that it can grow and have a powerful impact on our nation. Prayer is vital; God is looking for believing people, who will pray in faith until the blessing of the Lord is restored.

The world today is reeling under the curse of sin. The devastation of the curse is everywhere. As God's people walk in the blessing of the Lord, the power of the curse can be overturned. God's people carry the blessing of the Lord upon their lives. That power of the blessing is intended to impact our entire world for Christ.

One word of caution as you read this book: the blessing of God is powerful, but there is a trap that believers fall into - focusing primarily on God's blessings instead of focusing on Christ. Remember that for the mature believer, every blessing should only focus us more clearly on Christ, and enable us to glorify Christ more completely. We are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms, *in Christ*. (Eph.1:3).

* A note to any theologians who happen to be reading this book: Western theologians have tended to compartmentalize truths in the Word of God. Everything must fit in its own little box, neatly tied. The blessing of the Lord, however, overflows into many areas of the Word of God, making it impossible to compartmentalize. The nearest I can come to a theological summary is this: *Since the giving of the Spirit fulfills the promise of blessing given to Abraham for the Gentiles as they hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and respond to Him in faith (Gal.3:1-14, Gen.12:1-3, Gen.22:10-18), all of the varied ministries, gifts, fruit and works of the Holy Spirit are rightly seen as aspects of the blessing of the Lord, and are given for the mighty purpose of glorifying Jesus Christ, the Son of God, bringing more people to faith in Christ and thereby extending the blessing of God to the nations.* This summary will be in the background as we investigate various truths concerning God's blessing. I have sought to keep the language simple and straightforward, to more effectively communicate these truths to others. Much more can be said about the blessing of the Lord than what is written here, but I have made my best efforts to be balanced, and true to the message of the Word of God. M. Erickson

CHAPTER 2

The Blessing Of The Lord And Surrender

The blessing of the Lord must flow through a surrendered life. A life that is fully surrendered becomes a sweet channel of the blessing of the Lord. "Letting go" is something each child of God must learn to do, to walk in the full measure of the blessing of the Lord.

So often God's people hold on to things, things which need to be released for God's blessing to be able to flow richly through their lives. "Letting go" brings a release, so that God's blessing can flow down upon us and through us. In surrender is blessing, and once we learn the way of surrender we will come to deeply appreciate the power there is in releasing things into the Father's hands.

God is perfectly good, and His plan is what is best for our lives. In letting go of things, we experience God's blessing upon us. We also learn to cling more completely to our God, who is perfect love.

Abraham was greatly blessed of the Lord. He was a great channel of the Lord's blessing. God had promised to impact all of the nations of the earth through the blessing of Abraham. Yet this man had to surrender his son Isaac, and place him on the altar of God, for the full measure of the blessing of the Lord to flow through his life. In this we see a principle that is found in many places in the Word of God: true surrender allows God's blessing to flow through our lives.

Isaac was the son of Promise, the son given to Abraham and Sarah to fulfill God's promise of blessing to them. Yet God told Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice upon the altar. It is difficult if not impossible to imagine the surrender this involved, but in obedience to the Lord, Abraham surrendered his son and placed him on the altar. As a prophet, Abraham was foreshadowing the great sacrifice that God the Father was going to make: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him would not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

As Abraham was about to end his son's life, the angel of the Lord stopped him. Then the Lord spoke, and said, "I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not

withheld your son, your only son, I WILL SURELY BLESS YOU and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your seed all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me" (Gen.22:16-18 NIV).

The blessing of the Lord was promised to Abraham, because he had surrendered what was most precious to him, and placed it on God's altar. Abraham became a great channel of the blessing of the Lord because he yielded his will, in surrender to the Lord.

When we let go of something in obedience to God's will, the blessing of the Lord will undoubtedly come upon us. God will give us His blessing, for what we have given up. His blessing will come back upon us, and flow through us in new strength. Abraham received the power of the blessing upon his life and family; he also received his precious son back. The blessing of the Lord was multiplied, and flowed through his life in a new dimension.

There are many things that we must place upon God's altar, as we travel towards heaven. With confidence in the blessing of the Lord, we can let go of things much more easily. As we let go, the blessing of the Lord can flow down upon us in full measure. Letting go brings the blessing of the Lord into our lives, in new richness and power. His blessing may come in new ways, and in different ways than we were expecting. His blessing will enable us to become a blessing to others. We need to trust him, that his good purposes far exceed our understanding.

The Healthy Life

The surrendered life is a healthy life. "Letting go" is healthy for us. It is when we hold on to things, out of our own insecurity and fear, that we become troubled, angry or dissatisfied. Then we

block the blessing of the Lord. Surrender is healthy, because in surrendering you allow God to be in control. In surrender you let go of things that you weren't meant to carry anyway. God didn't design us to carry our own burdens. He didn't intend for us to worry about the future. "Letting go" is healthy; when we release things into God's hands, He is able to do a much better job of handling those things than we could ourselves.

When we surrender things to God, we are no longer trying to run our own lives. We are allowing God to be God, rather than trying to be our own god. The tendency of human nature is to want to be in control. We want to be in control of our lives, so that we can keep from getting hurt. We want to be in control because we want to insure that things go well for us. Or we want to be in control so that we can look good in front of other people. We want to be in control so that our lives are pleasurable, rather than painful. We seek to avoid pain, and to maximize what will give us pleasure or make us happy. That is human nature.

The problem with that is that it is self-centered, rather than God-centered. Self interest is at the heart of our attempts to be in control. God has to bring us to the place of surrender, to free us of our selfishness so that the blessing of the Lord can flow through us. God brings us to the place of surrender many times, so that we can grow as a channel of God's blessing and love. Here are some areas in which we must learn to surrender to the Lord:

Worries and Fears

God did not intend for us to worry about the future. He doesn't want us to be weighed down with anxieties and fears, about future events that may or may not happen. Worries and anxieties must be surrendered to the Lord. He is our God; we must allow Him to be in control of our lives. Allowing God to be in control means surrendering our burdens, to Him.

If you are troubled by worries and fears, it is a signal, that you need a fresh surrender to the Lord. You must surrender your life anew. Then the blessing of His peace can come upon you. The blessing of the Lord can flow through you, because you are no longer holding on to your own fears and anxieties.

Our Bodies

Our bodies are to be surrendered to the Lord, that He may have complete control of our lives. Romans 12:1 tells us, "present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship." (NASB). When our physical bodies are surrendered to God, He will give us His power so that what we do with our bodies will fulfill God's commandments, and His will. The members of our body will be used for godly purposes, and not for sexual immorality, drug addiction, or other damaging behaviors.

When our bodies are surrendered to the Lord, the members of our body are used as instruments of righteousness (Rom.6:13). Our hands, feet, and mouth are used as instruments of righteousness, to do what is right and to minister God's love and truth. Surrendering our bodies will bring the power of God upon us in a new way. The blessing of the Lord can flow through our lives, as our bodies are surrendered to God's control.

The Past

The past can become a painful hindrance, and keep you from walking in the blessing of God. Past failures can be used by Satan to chain a person down; past hurts and sins may keep you discouraged, and keep you from believing God for the restoration of the blessing in you life. You must let go of the past, and receive Christ's cleansing and forgiveness for past sins.

Blessings may have been lost in the past, but these past memories

must be surrendered to God. Christ is a restorer, and a forgiving Savior. He wants to restore the blessing in your life. The blessing of the Holy Spirit is given freely, to those who believe. Believe for the power of the blessing, the Holy Spirit, to come upon you. Believe for the power of the Holy Spirit to empower you to walk in a new life.

God doesn't intend for us to carry the weight of past failures. Place your past failures and sins upon God's altar, and allow the blood of Christ to cover them. He gave His life-blood, to free you from the burdens of the past.

Material Things

God provides for our physical needs. He promised that as we seek His kingdom first, He would meet our needs for food and covering as well (Matt.6:33). God promises to meet our needs; but material things must not be what we are holding on to for our security.

We must place material things upon God's altar. Our attitude should be, "Lord, these things are entirely at your disposal. Do with these things whatever you will. Guide me in your plans, and I will obey you." Our attachment to material things can hinder us from giving to others and being a blessing to people in need. Our attachment to material things can hinder us from following God's path for our lives, because we are too wrapped up in our possessions. Our possessions begin to possess us, and we lose our freedom to follow God's plan.

As we surrender material things to the Lord, He can use us, and bring the power of His blessing upon our lives. He will make us His instruments, to impact a world of need. Jesus told His disciples, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he shall receive a

hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life." (Mark 10:29,30 NASB). The focus of Jesus here was not on gaining more material things – the focus was on letting go, to follow Him!

The early disciples were great instruments of blessing to the world, because they were not attached to material things. They went where God wanted them to go; they ministered to people, and trusted God for His provisions. Many of them left farms, houses, jobs and lands for the sake of the gospel. They left everything in God's hands, and followed Him. The result was blessing to the world!

Loved Ones

There are times when God calls us to let go of loved ones, and place them in His hands. Rather than clinging to them out of our own dependencies or insecurities, we must release them. Then the blessing of the Lord can flow through us. We can love them and respond to them according to what they need, rather than selfishly clinging to them out of our own desire for security. What better hands could we find to place our loved ones in, than the Lord's? We can thank and praise Him for all that He is doing in their lives.

Letting go of loved ones will break us of our natural tendency to want to control other people. The way to end the tendency to control others is by learning to let go. A controlling person is insecure, and needs to learn to learn to let go of people; rather than controlling others he must let go of them, and rely instead on the Lord for strength, support, and security. As we let go and place our loved ones in God's hands, we can then love them for who they are and minister to their real needs.

Letting go of loved ones can also have another meaning: In order

to walk with the Lord, it is sometimes necessary to let go of our loved ones, because their desires or plans would keep us from following Christ and His commandments. If family members would turn you away from Christ, they must be released to the Lord. No one can be allowed to keep you from walking with Christ. You can still love them, without allowing them to control you. Jesus said that if we love father, mother, son or daughter more than we love Him, we are not worthy of Him (Matt. 10:37). Our love for Him must reign supreme. Anyone who becomes more important than Christ in our lives must be surrendered to God.

Future Plans

At times we make future plans according to our own wishes and desires, and these plans must be surrendered to the Lord. Then He is free to bless us, and guide us in the path of true blessing for our lives. He will fulfill His promise of blessing; sometimes it comes in a different manner than we were expecting. The path we are on may take unexpected turns, but the blessing of the Lord will meet us, as we look to the Lord and trust Him.

Things we plan sometimes don't work out; circumstances change, or people change; sometimes the Lord shows us that He has a different plan for us, than what we were thinking. It is a wise person who can surrender their plans to the Lord, and sincerely say, "Not my will, but Thine be done." God will then manifest His blessing in our lives, guiding us and making His blessing flow through us in new ways.

Our Will

When we can let go of our own will, and can say, "Not my will, but Thine be done," the blessing of the Lord will come upon us in a new dimension. We must set our heart upon doing His will, not our own. Then we become a channel for the blessing of the Lord

to flow through, in new richness and power.

As Jesus prepared to go to the cross, He was preparing to become the greatest channel of blessing in the history of mankind. Yet how was it accomplished? When Jesus said "Not My will, but Thine be done," He opened the floodgates of blessing. He became the greatest channel of blessing this world has ever seen. He carried out the plan of His heavenly Father, and the result was blessing to the world. Christ alone brought the blessing of salvation and eternal life into this world. Suffering did not deter Him from following the path of the Father, the path of blessing for the world. He is our example of surrender, when we need to say "Not my will, but Thine be done."

Unconditional Surrender

Living the surrendered life is truly the way of blessing; the saints of years ago knew this, and emphasized the importance of unconditional surrender to God. Placing yourself in the hands of God in full, trusting surrender allows God to take control of your life and situation with new power.

John Wesley was a man who had learned and practiced the principle of unconditional surrender to God. At one time when he was ministering, Wesley was captured by an angry mob that intended to kill him. As the mob swept him along, Wesley completely surrendered himself into the hands of God. As he was carried along, a man swung at him with a club, but the blows were somehow turned aside. Angry people came up to Wesley to strike him, but suddenly changed their minds. God was working supernaturally.

Through a series of events, Wesley escaped the mob, unharmed. He later testified that he constantly felt the peace of God surrounding him, the same as if he were at home in his study! Wesley had learned to surrender completely to God. He knew the

secret of surrender. Rather than looking to men, he looked to God.

People's Opinions

Do we strive for the approval of people? If we base our sense of acceptance upon what people think of us, we will never be happy. But if we surrender our worries about what other people think of us, we will find a new peace, and the blessing of the Lord will flow down upon our lives more easily. "Letting go" of our fears of people's opinions will bring about a wholesome attitude in us, as we base our acceptance upon God's love and grace, rather than what people think.

Signs of Need

There are some signs that indicate a lack of surrender in our lives. These signs can show us our need for a fresh surrender to God:

- (1) If we become easily angry or defensive, it shows we need a fresh surrender. Whatever we are angry or defensive about must be surrendered to the Lord.
- (2) If we are fearful and worried about present or future events, it means there is something we need to surrender. We must surrender control to God, and allow Him to manage our present and future.
- (3) If we are being controlled by addictions to alcohol, drugs, food, or sexual sins, it shows a lack of surrender to God. We must admit that we can no longer handle our life, and turn our life and our will over to God.
- (4) If our past is controlling us, condemning us, or influencing us in unhealthy ways, it must be surrendered to God. Our past must be released, and placed under the blood of Christ for His complete cleansing.

(5) If anything has become more important than the Lord in our life, it must be surrendered to God. Signs that something isn't right in our attitudes or actions can remind us of our need to surrender to God. If your life has never been surrendered to the Lord, He asks you to surrender it to Him. If there is something He is showing you that you need to let go of, release it to the Lord. Letting go brings the blessing of God upon your heart and life.

In this hour, God is calling His people to a new and fresh surrender. In surrender there is power. God will move in powerful ways, when we consecrate ourselves anew to God, in an unconditional surrender of our all, to Him.

The Altar

The altar is to be a place of surrender. Surrendering our lives, and placing them upon God's altar anew, will bring a fresh fire from heaven. Our lives, our bodies, our loved ones—all must be placed upon God's holy altar. When God brings you to the place of surrender, build an altar in prayer. Build an altar, and surrender whatever it is that God is asking you to release to Him. Then the blessing will surely fall from heaven! The blessing of the Holy Spirit will come upon you, in a new dimension of power and strength. The power of His blessing will flow through your life; the fire of God will fall from heaven and consume every barrier, so that you will be free to walk in His love and power.

Among God's people, the church altar must be restored as a focal point, a place of surrender and prayer. Coming to the altar in surrender to pray and seek God is a vital priority for the church. As we place our all upon the altar, and wait upon the Lord together, the power of the Spirit will move.

As we follow God's Word and God's will for our lives, letting go brings the blessing of the Lord upon our lives. Let us follow

Abraham, who surrendered his Isaac upon the altar, in obedience to the Lord. Blessing followed! We can be confident, and assured that the blessing of the Lord will increase upon our lives, as we learn to surrender all things to the Lord. Abraham's confidence in the promise of blessing is what enabled him to let go, and let God have His way (Heb.11:17-19). God in His goodness multiplies the blessing upon our lives, as we surrender all to Him.

We also need to remember this paradox: Abraham had to "let go" for the blessing, while his grandson Jacob had to "hold on" for the blessing! Abraham had to let go of something precious, while Jacob had to hold on to the Lord Himself. In other words, although we learn to surrender many things to the Lord, we need never let go of the Lord Himself! We can cling to Him, hold on to Him, and hold on to His promises. To cleave to the Lord and hold on to Him is our great privilege and our strength. Hold on to Him with all your heart and soul, until His Holy Spirit fills you to overflowing! Hold on to Him until His perfect love fills you and surrounds you. Hold on to Him, until His strength empowers you, and takes you into the full measure of His love!

CHAPTER 3

Faith And The Blessing

Faith is a crucial element in the blessing of the Lord. God's Word tells us, "The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith" (Gal.3:8,9 NIV). Those who have faith in Christ enter into the

blessing of the nations, that God promised to Abraham.

Those who have faith in Christ enter into the manifold provision of blessing outlined centuries ago to Abraham. Just as there are many aspects of faith, we will see that there are many ways in which faith impacts the reality of God's blessing. Christ must reign supreme in our lives. Our faith is important, because it leads us to Him.

Unmerited Grace

God blesses us by His grace; we don't deserve His blessing, yet He blesses us. It is by grace that we receive His blessing. The blessing of the Lord isn't deserved; we must simply believe. It is tremendously liberating to know that it is by grace that we receive God's blessing. Instead of trying to produce the blessing by our own striving and effort, we can rely upon God's grace, and His promise. The promise is sure, because God's grace is the foundation. Certainly there are things we are to do, in serving God. But the things we do are not the reason for the blessing; God's grace is the reason for the blessing. If God adds His blessing to what we do, we will be instruments of His blessing. But if God doesn't add His blessing, all the things that we strive to do will not produce good fruit. We are dependent upon God, for His blessing. And that means we are dependent upon His grace.

His undeserved blessing is the basis of our salvation. We didn't deserve to be given a Savior to die for our sins; but God gave us a Savior, by His grace. Every dimension of God's blessing is based on His grace. Our works are not the foundation; instead, believing in His Promise leads to the blessing.

Knowing God's grace gives us a sure foundation for our faith.

Our faith can lay hold of the blessing, because the promises of blessing are founded upon grace. By grace alone God has given His blessing, to people who cannot deserve it.

Eternal Life And A New Nature

"Only believe" is God's foundation for blessing the world: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, That whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16 NASB). The blessing of eternal life is given to those who believe in Christ with a genuine faith, that transforms the heart. Someone who truly believes in Christ is spiritually changed, and reborn by God's power. The evidence of genuine faith is an inner change, which causes a person to love God, and turn from sinful ways. Faith transforms the heart, and brings to pass the inner miracle of a new nature. The new nature that God gives us through faith is a new nature that loves God, and turns from sinful ways.

Some people believe in Christ intellectually, but have had no inner change in their life. Genuine faith is born in the heart, and brings about the inner transformation of a new nature that loves God. Only then is a person a child of God (John 1:12,13). Someone who has become a child of God through faith in Christ is given the assurance of eternal life. The assurance of eternal life comes into the heart of the one who truly has faith; that person is given a new nature which is created by the Holy Spirit. So faith in Christ brings about the blessing of a new nature, and the blessing of eternal life.

Eternal life is the great, everlasting blessing that completely surpasses all the things of this earth. It is a blessing so great that it will take forever to be experienced. It is an eternal, unending blessing given to those who have been transformed by faith in Christ.

The Blessing of the Spirit

Faith leads us into the blessing of the Spirit. The gift of the Spirit is received by faith (Gal. 3:5-14). God has promised us the blessing of His Spirit, to fill us and empower us abundantly. The blessing of the Spirit is promised; we are to ask and believe. Our faith is not in our faith; our faith is in Jesus, the One who gives the Spirit!

We often try to live the Christian life by our own effort; God says "Believe, and be given the power of the Holy Spirit!" The life-giving Holy Spirit is given to those who believe. The precious, heaven-sent Spirit comes to dwell within our hearts, filling us with overflowing love, peace, and every good gift. Believing in Jesus, we must come to him often, and drink (John 7:37-39).

The blessing of the Spirit will fill us, and immerse us in the Spirit's presence. The blessing of the Spirit gives us power over the sinful nature, sin, and difficult circumstances. We must believe for the great blessing, the blessing of the Spirit. The blessing of the Spirit is not only a one-time event; we can receive the blessing of the Spirit all along our journey. After our initial immersion in the Spirit, there are many times we need a fresh infilling of the Spirit.

The Spirit is received by faith. Some are hindered because they want to feel something before they believe. Believing comes first; experiencing the power and presence of the Spirit will surely follow. Ask, and then receive by faith. Believe that you have received the good gift that you have asked for; and the Spirit will fill you and empower you. We can approach God confidently, believing Him for the undeserved and mighty gift of the Spirit. It is by grace that the blessing of the Spirit is given; believe and receive, from the hand of Christ. We will look further into the gift of the Spirit, in chapter 6.

Righteousness

Faith also brings to us the blessing of righteousness. God sees our faith, and reckons it to us as righteousness (Rom.4:3-5). Because our faith is in the One who died for us, God sees that faith and reckons it as our righteousness. We have no righteousness of our own. Our own righteousness is as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). But we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ, when we put our faith in Him. Rather than striving to produce our own righteousness, we must only believe. Then we receive the gift of righteousness as an undeserved blessing (Rom.3:21,2). Our uncertainties and fears about our unworthiness to stand before God are covered, by God's gift of righteousness.

The gift of righteousness comes from above: "This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe." (Rom.3:22 NIV). When you believe, your faith is credited as your righteousness. Your righteousness is not off in the future, after you have done a certain number of good deeds. God sees your faith now, at the present time, and reckons that as your righteousness. Why? Because your faith is in Christ, who died for you to cover your sins, and clothe you in His righteousness. You are in right standing with God, and you are completely accepted by Him, if in your heart you believe in Christ. That is the blessing of righteousness.

Blessed in Our Circumstances

Circumstances may appear to contradict God's promise of blessing. We may have to wait, for the blessing of the Lord to appear. We must believe, before we see. We must believe, before we see the blessing of the Lord manifested. Often those who have waited the longest, have seen the greatest manifestation of God's blessing.

Thomas wanted to see, before he could believe in the risen Christ.

Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:29 NIV). We must believe in Christ, even without seeing Him. We must believe, even without seeing the blessing of the Lord. Too often we go by what our eyes see, and what we feel, rather than by faith. The blessing of the Lord is promised, in many dimensions. But for each of those dimensions to be entered into and experienced, we must believe.

It is so important to continue to believe in God's goodness, even when circumstances are against you. During times when circumstances are difficult, you can still experience the powerful interior blessing of the Lord. This interior provision, which is a dimension of the fruit of the Spirit, can be known and experienced in powerful ways. The fruit of love, joy and peace (Gal.5:22) can be experienced even in the times when outward circumstances are against you.

You can experience the inner blessing of peace, even in the midst of storms. The power of His blessing can strengthen you, with a fortress of inner peace. In difficult times, you can also be filled with God's love, in a supernatural way. The love of God can be poured out richly within your heart through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5). As the Psalmist said, "Blessed be the LORD, for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me when I was in a besieged city." (Psalm 31:21 ESV).

You can receive the inner blessing, the filling of the Spirit, regardless of what your circumstances may look like. Also, it is the inner presence of the Holy Spirit that can give you peace, when the outward circumstances are difficult. Often God begins working in a situation by changing our inner life; then later He changes our circumstances. First He gives us victory in our inner life; then He removes the outward difficulty. This is the way of faith.

Paul and Silas were in a painful situation, when they were beaten for preaching the gospel, and thrown into prison (Acts 16:22-24). They had no idea what the outcome would be. Beaten and bleeding, they were chained in their prison cell. But did they complain or become bitter? No, they started singing! The fruit of the Spirit was manifested. God's love and peace, the fruit of the Spirit, filled their hearts and overflowed in praise to God. And the prisoners were listening (Acts 16:25). God gave them inner peace, love, and a spirit of worship, even though their circumstances were painful and difficult. God enabled them to overcome their circumstances, through the tangible expression of the fruit of the Spirit. And the other prisoners were touched, by the powerful fruit of the Spirit that Paul and Silas experienced.

After the inner victory had been won, and the inner blessing had been experienced, then God intervened in their circumstances. He sent an earthquake, and broke loose all their bars and chains. They were set free from their confining circumstances, as God's hand moved. There is an appointed time, when God breaks us out of our prisons. We all experience times of confinement and restriction in our lives; some of our prison experiences can last a long time. But every child of God will experience the breaking loose of the prison doors and chains, as God's hand moves. And a day is coming, when every bar will be shattered, and every confinement ended. That is the glorious liberty that is promised to the children of God (Romans 8:19-21).

As we wait for the moving of God in our circumstances, we can believe for the powerful inner blessing of the Holy Spirit. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (2 Cor. 3:17). His love, His joy, and His peace can fill us to overflowing. Often our most important ministry will be during our difficult experiences, because there are other prisoners who will be listening. They will "hear" the song of worship that flows from the fruit of the Spirit.

Overcoming Negativism

It is faith that conquers negativism, complaining, and unbelief, and leads us into the power of the blessing. Negativism and complaining have robbed many people of the blessing of the Lord. Looking at the negative side of things, and grumbling and complaining are the opposite of faith. Faith looks at the promises of God and the power of God. Faith sees what God is able to do, and what God has promised to do. If we are walking by faith, we will not yield to negative and critical thinking, or complaining words. Some of the people of Israel in the wilderness grumbled and complained, instead of trusting in the power of God's blessing. Those who grumbled and complained hindered God's blessing in their lives. If only they had trusted, and waited upon the Lord for the fullness of His blessing!

Our circumstances can greatly influence how we think. In our thinking we are tempted to look at the negative side of things. We are tempted to dwell on the negative. But faith dwells on the positive statements in Scripture of what God can do, and on the goodness of God Himself. The people in the wilderness began to dwell on negative things, when their water and food began to run low. They dwelt on the negative, instead of looking to a good God who had promised to take care of them.

They dwelt on how things looked. It looked like they were going to run out of food. It looked like they were going to run out of water. But God always supplied for their needs. No one ever starved in the wilderness! But when they dwelt on the negative, they grumbled and complained instead of believing for the blessing. Negativism and unbelief can rob people of the blessing that God desires to give them. Faith obtains the blessing of the Lord; but complaining and grumbling and disputing block the hand of God. The blessing is hindered by negativism, more than we realize.

We must believe courageously, even when the odds seem to be

against us. We can courageously face the opposition of difficult circumstances, because we know the promises of God, and the power of God. God's promise of blessing is sure, and will not fail. Even the difficult things that we experience will increase the measure of blessing we are given in the future, as we continue to walk in God's ways. God's blessing will come through in our lives, causing even negative and painful things to result in greater dimensions of blessing for our lives on this earth, and in eternity (Rom.5:3-5, James 1:2-4, 2 Cor.4:17,18). God truly is able to make all things work together for our good (Romans 8:28).

Our attitude is so important. A positive and faith-filled attitude will help keep us in the flow of God's "in-house" blessing, even when outward circumstances seem barren or unpromising. Rather than allowing outward prosperity or wealth to determine our attitudes, we must realize that the inner blessing of the fruit of the Spirit is a treasure of incredible worth. To have God's peace and love filling your heart, independent of the control of circumstances, is powerful indeed. It is something that all the money in this world cannot buy.

An attitude of faith will keep us from grumbling and complaining words. An attitude of faith will keep the power of God flowing in our lives. Each of us has a choice; we choose the attitude we are going to respond with. In each life situation, our attitude will make all the difference in the world. The greatest resource we have to strengthen our faith and our thinking is the Word of God. The Word of God renews your mind (Romans 12:1-2), and helps you to develop an attitude of unwavering faith in Christ.

Living in Expectancy

God wants us to live in expectancy of His blessing. We cannot rely on our own resources, abilities, or strength; but we can rely upon something much greater: the power of the Spirit. The blessing of the Spirit is promised. When we look to the future, we

ought to have an expectant and trusting attitude towards God. If there are things that would hinder God's blessing in our lives, we must remove them. Then we can have confidence in the power of God's blessing for the future.

Having God's blessing is not based on outward circumstances! This is a lesson we must learn. Having God's blessing doesn't mean that things will always happen the way you want them to. It doesn't mean that circumstances will be easy all of the time. Having the peace of God in your heart is all the richer when you experience it in spite of circumstances, not because of them.

The blessing of the Lord may come upon our lives in different ways than we were expecting. Our faith will be tested and tried. But as we rely upon the Lord and walk in His ways, the blessing of the Lord will surely come. In many situations it is the inner blessing of God's love, joy and peace (Gal.5:22) that makes all the difference, and can show people the reality of Christ in our lives.

CHAPTER 4

Christ And The Blessing

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." (Ephesians 1:3 NASB)

The blessing of Almighty God is given in Jesus Christ. Christ is the gift of blessing, the gift given by the Father, to bless the world: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16 NASB). Out of love and compassion for the world, God sent His Son. God sent His Son to bless the

world, with the greatest possible blessing: life in Christ, that lasts forever.

Christ Himself is the blessing; the blessing of the Lord is wrapped up in a person, Jesus Christ. We are blessed in our relationship with Christ; knowing Him, and putting our faith in Him, we are blessed. The blessing of the Lord is not just a concept or a principle. It is only in our relationship with Christ, and our submission to Him, that the blessing of the Lord is given. The full measure of the blessing rests upon Christ. The Father has revealed His love, and His blessing for this world, uniquely in Christ. Christ is love, revealed in a personal way so that we can personally know the invisible, loving God.

We must continually remember that earthly blessings are not our focus: it is Christ Himself, ruling and reigning at the right hand of the Father, who is far above every blessing. We are to set our hearts upon Him (Col.3:1,2). Knowing Christ and exalting Christ should be our goal; it is our relationship with Christ that is most important.

The blessing of Christ is found in the revelation He gives us, of the nature of God. God's nature and God's character are revealed through Christ. When He gave Himself to die for us so that our sins could be washed away, it was God's personal love for each one of us that moved Him to give His life for us. What awesome love! We can come to know this love in fuller and fuller ways, until we step into eternity. This revelation of love is not just for the beginning Christian; it is ever to be at the center of our hearts. It is the love that died for us, to make us one with God (I Cor.6:17).

Christ Within Us

Another dimension of the blessing of Christ is that He personally comes to dwell in us as believers. He is not only with us; He

dwells within us. Paul asked, "Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you?" (2 Cor.13:5b NIV). He comes to live His life in us. The Christian life is not an attempt to follow certain rules and codes, it is Christ living His life in us. The Lord Himself comes to dwell within us, in our innermost being. No one can take away the treasure that we have, the treasure of the indwelling Christ.

It is an unspeakable blessing, to have Christ dwelling in us. We can have communion and fellowship with Him no matter where we are, because He dwells within us. Christ living and ruling within us is our strength.

The Bread of Life

Jesus is the bread of life that can satisfy our hunger. He said, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6:35 NIV). Only Jesus can satisfy the innermost hunger of people's hearts. He is the bread that came down from heaven, to give life to the world. Those who come to Him will never go hungry.

Jesus took the bread during the Last Supper, and blessed it, and said, "Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you." (I Cor. 11:24 KJV). The body of Christ was broken for us, so that we could have the bread of life. He is the bread of life, the only food that can satisfy our souls. Other things may satisfy for a season, but the bread of life lasts forever, and satisfies the deepest needs of our hearts. Jesus promised, "He who comes to me will never go hungry." (Jn.6:35 NIV). The question we must ask is, what are we feeding on?

The Blessing of Forgiveness

Receiving forgiveness for our sins is a powerful blessing, through which God intends to transform our lives. There is a tremendous healing we receive when we are forgiven for our sins, and when

we receive complete assurance of that forgiveness. Sinners came to Jesus and wept at His feet, knowing that He offered them a full and complete forgiveness for their sins. The woman who bowed at the feet of Jesus, weeping for her sins, heard Him say to her, "Your sins have been forgiven." (Lu.7:48 NASB).

She received a marvelous healing through the power of God's forgiveness. Her life was transformed, and she was cleansed of all her past sins. After Jesus assured her of forgiveness, He said to her, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace." (Lu.7:50 NASB). Her faith in Christ resulted in forgiveness. Her sins were forgiven, because she believed in Him.

The powerful blessing of forgiveness is spoken of in Romans 4:7,8: "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account." (NASB). This blessing of forgiveness is given to all who turn away from their sins, and place their faith in Jesus Christ. When we turn away from our sins and put our faith in Christ, all of our sins are forgiven; all of our guilt, of every kind, is removed by God's great love and mercy. Forgiveness of sins is given through Jesus Christ alone.

The Father's Blessing

God the Father has blessed us in Christ (Eph. 1:3). There is a parallel found in the Old Testament. Fathers would bless their sons, placing their hands upon them and speaking words of blessing over them. The blessing of the Father was sought after, and had a powerful impact. God the Father has placed us in His Son, and has blessed us in His Son, Jesus Christ. The Father has bestowed all blessing upon His Son. When Jesus was being baptized, the Father said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." (Matt.3: 17 NASB). At that time, the blessing of the Spirit came upon Jesus in full measure, in the form of a dove. The Father's blessing rested upon His Son, in full measure.

Today, the Father's blessing is given to us, in the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Father's blessing is bestowed upon us, in the infilling of the Spirit. He bestows His blessing because we are in His Son. He sends the Spirit upon us, the heavenly dove, to fill us and empower us.

Breaking the Curse

Jesus Christ is the vessel of God's blessing to the world. He came to break the curse, and to make the blessing of God flow to the ends of the earth. When God promised that through Abraham and his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed, it was a prophetic promise of the blessing that would come through Christ, who is called the seed of Abraham (Gal.3:16, Gen.22: 18).

As Abraham's seed, Christ would bring the blessing of God to all the nations. No longer limited to the physical descendants of Abraham, the power of the blessing would flow out to all the nations, as the message of God's love, grace, and purity was spread through the word of the Gospel.

To bring the power of God's blessing to the ends of the earth, Christ had to conquer the curse. The curse had been upon the earth, since man's first sin of disobedience. As a result of man's sin, the curse overshadowed the earth and infected every society. The curse of war, the curse of crime, injustice and poverty, immorality and strife, lying, pride, and murder has infected every nation in various ways. Looking at human history it is all too obvious that the curse of sin is deeply rooted in mankind, bringing heartbreak and tragedy wherever it is manifested. Every human being experiences the curse of sin, and death.

To break the power of the curse, Jesus Christ became accursed for us, when He took our sins upon the cross. He took the penalty for our sins. He took the curse upon Himself, so that we could receive

the power of God's blessing (Gal.3:13,14). Jesus broke the power of the curse, by becoming cursed in our place. By breaking the power of the curse, He released the power of God's blessing upon our lives. No longer living under the curse, we can live under the blessing of God the rest of our lives.

The curse is broken when we receive Christ, putting all of our faith and trust in Him. His blood was shed upon the cross to cover our sins, destroying the curse. All who truly believe in Jesus as their Lord, and who confess Him with their mouth, are born anew. Those who have been thus spiritually reborn through faith in Christ are placed in Christ, and enter into the promise of blessing.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." (Eph. 1:3 NASB). Every true blessing has been given to us in Christ. Christ is the reason for the blessing, and Christ is the gift of blessing. The blessing of God upon our lives is to exalt and glorify Christ, and draw us closer to Him. Christ has purchased the blessing for us; we are totally dependent upon Him. As John Wesley said, "All the blessings I enjoy, all I hope for in time and in eternity, are given wholly and solely for the sake of what Christ has done and suffered for me," (Wesley's Works, Vol.5, p.245). We are totally dependent on Christ, for the very least of His blessings. Christ's suffering upon the cross is what purchased the blessing of God for us. The blessings of forgiveness, healing, salvation and eternal life all flow from His cross, to us. Christ himself must be our goal and purpose, not earthly blessing.

The blessings of the Lord must never become more important than the Lord Himself. No blessing can be allowed to come between us and Christ. Every blessing should draw us closer to Him. We cannot "use" Christ to get His blessings. We are to use the blessings, to exalt and glorify Christ! The power of God's blessing is to enable us to glorify Christ. A life that is blessed of

the Lord will exalt Christ, and draw people unto Him. So we can use the blessings of God to exalt and honor our head, Jesus Christ.

This is especially true of that "best of blessings," the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is given to exalt and glorify Christ. Christ is exalted in our lives and glorified in the world, by the working of the Holy Spirit. The wonderful power of the Holy Spirit will always draw us to Christ, and point other people to Christ, to glorify Him.

Jesus and the Kingdom of God

The Jewish people looked forward to the reign of a Messianic King, who would bring the fulfillment of God's plan of blessing to the people of Israel. This King would bring the blessing of the Lord to the ends of the earth. Speaking of this Messianic King, Psalm 72 says, "In his days the righteous will flourish; prosperity will abound till the moon is no more. He will rule from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth....May his name endure forever; may it continue as long as the sun. All nations will be blessed through him, and they will call him blessed." (Ps.72:7,8, 17 NIV).

The blessing of the Lord would impact all the nations, through this King. "All nations will be blessed through him." (v.17). The blessing of the Lord, promised centuries before to Abraham, would flow through the Messiah to impact all the nations of the earth. This promise of blessing was fulfilled through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because Christ has risen from the dead, His reign is an everlasting reign. He will rule forever. The blessing of the Lord has been given through Jesus Christ to all who believe in Him, the risen Savior and King.

Jesus spoke often of the kingdom of God. The kingdom Jesus spoke of was not an earthly kingdom, based on material things. He said, "My kingdom is not of this world." (Jn.18:36 NIV). The

blessing of the Lord is poured out in the kingdom of God. As Jesus spoke of the kingdom of God He revealed the power of the blessing that He would bring, as the Messiah. The blessing of the Lord comes through Christ, and His kingly rule. Wherever Christ rules, the blessing of the Lord is poured out. God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms, in Christ (Eph.1:3).

Jesus was sent to bless us, by turning us from our wicked ways (Acts 3:26). So His message of entrance into the kingdom of God was, "Repent and believe the good news! (Mk. 1:15 NIV). The blessing of God can only be experienced by those who turn from sinful ways, and believe in Christ.

In the parables, Jesus spoke of the blessing of the kingdom. He spoke of growth and fruitfulness (Matt. 13:3-23). He spoke of gradual increase (Matt. 13:31,32). He spoke of using our talents, to bring an increase of blessing (Matt.25: 14-30). He spoke of the final separation of the blessed and the cursed (Matt.25:31-46).

He also spoke of the supreme value of the kingdom (Matt. 13:44,45); He emphasized humility, and childlike faith as the attitude of the kingdom (Matt. 18:1-4). He spoke of God's forgiveness, and of the absolute necessity of forgiving others, as a dimension of the blessing of the kingdom (Matt.18:23-35). He warned of riches, and how they could hinder people from coming into the blessing of the kingdom (Matt.19:23-26).

Jesus taught that a spiritual rebirth was necessary, to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3-5). He emphasized that His kingdom was not of this world (Jn.18:36), and that the ultimate fulfillment of the kingdom of God would not be in this life, but in the life to come (Matt.25:31- 46).

The blessing of the Lord will be completely fulfilled when God's people receive their inheritance in the kingdom of God: "Then the

King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.' (Matt.25:34 NIV).

The Beatitudes

The kingdom of God is the rule of Christ in people's hearts and lives. Where Christ is ruling, the blessing of the Lord is poured out. Where people have surrendered their hearts and inner lives to Christ, the blessing of the Lord will be manifested. The blessing of the Lord will grow, bearing fruit and bringing increase. Jesus spoke of the blessing that comes from having the right attitudes and motivations, in the beatitudes. In the kingdom of God, the inner attitudes and motivations of our hearts are what lead to blessing:

(1)"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt.5:3 KJV). The poor in spirit, those who know their poverty and need, will be blessed. They will be given the kingdom of heaven. The poor in spirit will find the blessings of love, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit; They will also receive an eternal inheritance, in God's kingdom. The poor in spirit know their total dependence upon God.

(2)"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." (Matt.5:4 KJV). Those who mourn shall receive the blessing of comfort. The blessing is promised, that will comfort God's people in times of sorrow. God comforts those who are in trouble (2 Cor.1:4). Those who are in trouble can receive the blessing of comfort and strength from the Lord.

(3)"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." (Matt.5:5 KJV). The meek are promised a powerful blessing: they shall inherit the earth. The blessing of the Lord will bring about not only a new heaven, but a new earth as well (2 Pt.3:13). This blessing is promised to the meek, those who have surrendered all

into the hands of God.

(4)"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." (Matt.5:6 NASB). Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness shall receive the blessing of righteousness, from above. They shall be satisfied, with the blessing of righteousness. This righteousness is imparted by the Holy Spirit. It is an undeserved blessing, given by grace to those who hunger and thirst for it.

(5)"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." (Matt.5:7 NASB). Those who show mercy to others will receive blessing. They will receive the blessing of mercy, from God and man. Those who forgive others will be forgiven themselves. The blessing of the Lord will come upon them.

(6)"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Matt.5:8 NASB). The pure in heart will be given the ultimate blessing, of seeing God. Now we can only see Him through the eyes of faith (Heb. 11:27); then we shall see Him in the fullness of His glory. This blessing is promised to the pure in heart, those whose hearts have been cleansed by the love of God.

(7)"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." (Matt.5:9 NASB). Those who labor to bring people into the peace of God, and those who bring people into peace with one another, will be called sons of God. Being called a child of God is a great and glorious blessing: "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!" (I Jn.3:1 NIV). Peacemakers shall be known as children of God.

(8)"Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt.5:10 NASB). The blessing of God's kingdom is given in a special way, to those who have suffered persecution. The blessing of the Lord rests upon those who have suffered for the sake of Christ.

(9)"Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely on account of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matt.5:11, 12 NASB). The blessing is promised to those who are insulted, lied about, and persecuted because they are followers of Christ. Because of the great promise of blessing, Jesus gives us an unusual way to respond to persecution: "Rejoice and be glad." (v12). In another place, He tells us, "leap for joy." (Lu.6:23). We are not to become angry with our persecutors; we are not to become argumentative; Jesus said, "leap for joy."

The blessing of the Lord is a vital dimension of the Messiah's rule. In Him all the nations shall be blessed. So where Christ and His kingdom are ruling in people's lives, the blessing of the Lord will be manifested.

Ascension Blessing

As Christ prepared to return to the Father, He bestowed His blessing upon the disciples: "When He had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, He lifted up His hands and blessed them. While He was blessing them, He left them and was taken up into heaven." (Lu.24:50,51 NIV). As we see Christ lifting up His hands to bless His people, we see a revelation of the power of the risen Christ. The risen Christ, who had conquered sin and death, was raising His hands to bless His people. The risen Christ, victorious over Satan, victorious over the darkness of this world, victorious over the grave, was raising His hands to bestow the blessing upon His disciples.

The Lord intends to bless His people. We see this in the Ascension blessing that Christ bestowed. He raised His hands, His nail-scarred hands, in triumphant blessing. There should be no doubt in any of our minds that God's will is to bless each one

of us. If there is any question, we should look to the nail- scarred hands. After He suffered for us, He lifted His hands in blessing.

While Christ was blessing them, He was taken into heaven. This signifies that the blessing of Christ is continuing uninterrupted from His position of glory at the right hand of the Father. Jesus is our great High Priest, and as our High Priest He is speaking words of blessing over us. Because He lives forever, He has a permanent priesthood (Heb.7:24). Since we have a great High Priest, who is ministering the blessing of God to us, "let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful." (Heb.10:22-23 NIV).

A few days after His ascension, the blessing of Christ resulted in the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The blessing of the Lord was poured out, in richness and power. The blessing came upon the church, in full measure. The blessing of Christ is what the early believers relied on with confidence. Paul said, "I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ." (Rom.15:29 NIV). He had complete confidence, in the power of the blessing of Christ; nothing could shake him from this confidence.

As we look to Christ, we can trust Him for His blessing. May we hunger and thirst, to walk in the full measure of the blessing of Christ! We often walk in part of the blessing; but it is the full measure of the blessing that will overturn the power of the curse, and impact our world for Christ. May we grow into a full assurance of faith, knowing that the blessing of Christ will be resting upon our lives, and flowing through us in full measure.

CHAPTER 5

Strength From The Lord

"How blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee."

(Psalm 84:5 NASB)

Strength, power for living, is needed by everyone in these challenging times. And God wants to give you His strength, in an abundant supply. But God's ways are higher than man's ways, and God's thoughts are higher than man's thoughts (Isaiah 55:8,9). This is undoubtedly true, when it comes to the strength of the Lord. God's ways of strengthening you are different than man's ways.

God's purpose is to make you strong. In fact, "He is the One who gives power and strength to his people." (Psalm 68:35). God's purpose is to strengthen you, and to give you power in His ways. You are even commanded, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might!" (Ephesians 6:10). God *wants* you to be strong. Strong in Him, strong in love, strong because you are filled with the Holy Spirit. You must have an unshakable confidence, that God's purpose is to make you strong in Him. When you face situations which you don't understand, or when you encounter obstacles, difficulties, or painful situations which you were not expecting, it is easy for you to lose sight of God's purposes.

God's thoughts are not like our thoughts. Our thoughts can become thoughts of fear or discouragement, anger or frustration. Thoughts like: "I'll never be able to get through this," or, "God must be punishing me for something I've done," or, "The Lord is against me," can become a part of our thinking.

But God's thought is to make you strong! His will is to make you

stronger, not to tear you down. You must become strong in the ways of the Lord. "The way of the Lord is strength to the upright." (Prov.10:29 KJV) God says to you, "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you. Surely I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10, NASB). The strength of the Lord is more than enough, to meet every obstacle.

God's Word says, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim.2: 1 KJV). The Word says, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." (Rom.8:37 KJV). The Word says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil.4:13), and, "The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1 KJV). God's promise is, "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." (Isaiah 30:15 KJV). Yes, God wants you to be strong!

David was a man who knew the ways of the Lord. He was a man after God's own heart. Yet he encountered a situation that from all appearances looked like a complete tragedy. He and his men were away from their camp, when the Amalekites came and raided the camp. They took all of the women and children, all of their belongings, and burned the town with fire (I Sam.30: 1,2). When David and his men came back to their camp and found it completely destroyed, "then David and the people who were with him lifted their voices and wept until there was no strength in them to weep." (I Sam.30:4 NASB). To make things worse, David became distressed because the people spoke of stoning him. They were embittered because of the loss of their loved ones in this terrible tragedy (I Sam.30:6).

David could easily have turned his back on the Lord in such a perilous situation. He could easily have thought that God was against him, or that God had forgotten him. He could have become bitter, like some of the people did. But David knew the

Lord. He knew that the Lord was for him, not against him. He knew that God's purpose was to strengthen him in this situation. So, "David strengthened himself in the Lord his God." (I Sam.30:6 NASB). He received strength from the Lord; power to overcome and to conquer.

David inquired of the Lord, and received word from the Lord, to pursue the Amalekites. He did, and found them eating and drinking and partying, spread over the countryside. They were celebrating over their plunder. David and his men completely conquered the Amalekites, and recaptured all of their wives and children. They recovered all that had been taken from them; they also recovered all of the plunder of the Amalekites. They not only recaptured what was lost, but received over and above it. God was in control.

Not long after this incident, David was made king over Judah. The Amalekite raid was one of the greatest testings David faced, and it happened shortly before he was made king. David could have walked away from God's plan, in the time of testing. But he knew God's purposes, and that his God wanted him to be strong. Do we realize that it is true, for us as well?

David strengthened himself in the Lord his God (I Sam.30:6). How can we receive more of the strengthening power of the Lord into our hearts and lives? Here are some of the ways you can receive strength from the Lord:

1. Those who WAIT ON THE LORD shall renew their strength (Isaiah 40:31). You need to spend time waiting before the Lord, thanking Him and honoring Him, and placing your situations in His hands; you need to spend significant, quality time with Him. The Spirit will surely come like the wind, to strengthen you.

2. CALL ON THE LORD, in earnest entreaty. "On the day I called, Thou didst answer me; Thou didst make me bold with

strength in my soul." (Psalm 138:3 NASB).

3. BELIEVE that it is undoubtedly God's purpose to impart strength to you, and to make you strong, no matter what the situation may look like. God's promises are clear, that the will of the Lord is to strengthen you (Psalm 105:4, Isaiah 30:15, Psalm 68:35, Psalm 27:14 / Eph.6: 10,11, 2 Tim.2:1, Isaiah 41: 10, Isaiah 40:31).

4. You must TURN FROM SIN, to be strengthened by the Lord. Sin is what can make you weak. The Psalmist said, "My strength has failed because of my iniquity." (Psalm 31:10 NASB). You must turn from sin, and receive cleansing and forgiveness through the blood of Christ. God will help you to make a fresh start, and to leave the past behind.

5.DRAW NEAR TO THE LORD. It is the Lord Himself who is your strength. Drawing near to Him insures that His strength will dwell in you, because His presence will be near you and in you. You are told to "seek the Lord, and His strength." (Psalm 105:4).

6.BE OF GOOD COURAGE. The Word of God says, "Wait on the Lord. Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart." (Ps.27:14 KJV). If you have courage, God is able to strengthen you. You must have courage and faith when you draw near to God, knowing that it is His will to strengthen you, and to clear a path for you. David was of good courage, when he went out to face Goliath. We must also be of good courage, when we face our battles.

7.The WORD OF GOD strengthens your faith, and builds you up. The Word of God can be relied upon, with confidence. "Strengthen me, according to Thy Word." (Psalm 119:28 NASB). Meditate on, and rely upon, the Word of God. Saturate your mind and your spirit with the Word, and the promises of the Word, for your strengthening. As you do these things, God will impart His

strength to you. You will be strengthened to walk in victory, and walk in faith. God will show himself strong on your behalf.

Being strong as a follower of Christ does not mean pushing other people around, dominating other people, or being otherwise obnoxious. Strength from the Lord makes you strong enough to love people, strong enough to be gentle with the obnoxious, strong enough to do the right things at the right times, with the peace of God in your heart. It is awesome, to have the strength of His love! We must remember that the strength of love is the opposite of the strength of selfishness.

At times God's people can begin to drift, and begin to coast along on their own strength. We can gradually begin to do things in our own strength, and not even realize that we are no longer walking in the strength of the Lord. That is why we must seek fresh strength from the Lord day by day and week by week. We must seek fresh strength in prayer, the Word, and waiting upon the Lord. The Israelites in the wilderness so often missed God's purposes. God wanted to make them strong - strong in faith, strong in trust, strong in the Lord. But when food and water began to run low, they didn't feel strong; they felt weaker. They missed God's purpose - He wanted to strengthen them, and provide for all of their needs. But they often doubted, or grumbled and complained. God's ways were higher than their ways.

But throughout the wanderings of the Israelites, Caleb had learned of God's strength. After forty years in the wilderness, he could say, "I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out. I am just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. Now give me this hill country that the Lord promised me that day." (Joshua 14:11,12 NIV). Caleb knew that God's purpose was to make him strong. The blessing of the Lord was powerfully manifested in his life. He received the full measure of the blessing of the Lord.

As we are strengthened by the Lord, part of God's purpose is that

we help others to find that same strength. We should be like Jonathan: during a difficult time he went to David, and helped him to find strength in God (I Sam.23: 16). When brothers or sisters in Christ, or others we love are passing through a difficult time, they need someone who can help them find strength from the Lord. We are to pray for one another, and bear one another's burdens. Then God will use us as His channels, to bring the blessing of strength from the Lord to those who need it.

CHAPTER 6

The Blessing Of The Spirit

The blessing of the Lord is promised to believers. The great blessing, the blessing of the Spirit, comes to those who ask and believe. We can believe for the blessing of the Spirit because this is promised by the Father. The gift of the Spirit is called the promise of the Father in Luke 24:49. Jesus said, "Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you." (KJV). He was speaking of the Holy Spirit. He will send the blessing; we receive it by believing.

The blessing of the Spirit is truly the great blessing. It is our privilege to receive the great and powerful blessing of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit Himself, the third person of the Trinity, comes to dwell within us! He comes to strengthen us with His love, His joy, and His peace. The indwelling of the Spirit is the Great Treasure; the Holy Spirit comes to abide within us - God's own presence filling us, renewing us, and satisfying us! The Holy Spirit comes to dwell in you and to fill you with His love and peace. He also comes to give you power - power over the sinful nature, power over sin, and power that lifts you above our circumstances. He comes to give you power to minister God's Word in a grace-

giving way, to those around you.

Immersed in Love

To be filled with God's Spirit is to be immersed in love, for love is a fruit of the Spirit. The great blessing of the Spirit is so precious, because it results in an overflowing of love within our hearts. Love is what this world needs; love is what our own hearts desire and seek; and love is poured out within us by the Holy Spirit.

We can believe for the blessing of the Spirit that will fill our hearts with an overflowing love, a love that will satisfy our own hearts and enable us to love others with the love of Christ. God is love. So the blessing of the Spirit must be an immersion in love. In all that we do, in all our words, work and ministry, what we need is the Spirit of love to fill us and empower us. Work that is done in love will have God's blessing upon it. Words that are spoken in love will bear fruit. We must ask and believe for the blessing of the Spirit, to fill us with an overflowing love.

Fulfillment of the Promise of Blessing

The blessing of the Spirit fulfills God's great promise to Abraham, that through Abraham and his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed. When we receive the promise of the Spirit by faith, the blessing of the Lord fills us and overflows us. The purpose of God is fulfilled in giving us the great blessing, the blessing of the Spirit: "He 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." (Gal.3: 14 NIV).

By faith we receive the blessing of the Spirit. This can happen not just once, but many times in our walk with God. We can receive the promise of the Spirit, whenever we pray and believe. The

Holy Spirit will come, imparting life and love. The Holy Spirit will fill us with all of His graces. The Holy Spirit will lift us over the barriers of self, and circumstances. It is by faith that we receive. When we come to the Lord and ask for the blessing of the Spirit, we are to simply believe and receive it. Receive it by faith - because it is clearly and definitely promised by our Lord. Jesus said, "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13 NIV).

Receive the blessing by faith - regardless of what your feelings may be. Feelings may vary; but we receive the blessing of the Spirit by faith alone. When we ask in faith, God will send His Spirit. We can ask the Lord often, for a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit.

The Baptism of the Spirit

The Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us as believers, from the moment we believe in Christ. The Holy Spirit dwells within us, imparting His life and love. The Holy Spirit empowers us to walk the Christian walk. But there is also another dimension of the Spirit: the Baptism of the Spirit, which is distinct from the coming of the Spirit into our hearts and lives at salvation.

The Baptism of the Spirit is an empowering and anointing for ministry (Acts 1:8). It is to enable us to be witnesses for Christ, spreading the gospel of Christ with liberty and power. The blessing of the Lord goes forth as we spread the good news of Christ. The Baptism of the Spirit helps us to do that. The Baptism of the Spirit is an important dimension of the blessing of the Lord; years ago it was referred to as the "second blessing" (the first blessing being salvation).

During one of His resurrection appearances, Jesus imparted the Holy Spirit to His disciples (John 20:19-22). However, He also

told them to wait for the promise of the Father, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (Lu.24:49, Acts 1:4,5, Acts 2:1-18). After Christ ascended, He sent this Baptism of the Spirit on the church on the day of Pentecost: "And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance." (Acts 2:2-4 NASB). They were wonderfully baptized with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues as a sign of this infilling.

This Baptism of the Spirit came to impart power and energy to the church for the evangelizing of the world. On that first Pentecost, 3000 were added to the church. The power of the Spirit enabled them to spread the Good News far and wide, bringing the blessing of the Lord to the nations. This first Pentecost for the church was the beginning of the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy: "And it shall be in the last days," God says, "that I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even upon My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophecy." (Acts 2:17,18 NASB).

The blessing of the Spirit is being poured out upon all of mankind. This fulfills the blessing promised to Abraham, that through Abraham and his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen.22:16-18). The blessing of the Spirit is given through Jesus Christ to those who believe. The promise of blessing is fulfilled as the Spirit is poured out on all the nations of the earth. As with other dimensions of the Spirit, the Baptism of the Spirit is received by faith. When we seek the Baptism of the Spirit, we must draw near to Jesus. He is the one who baptizes us in the Spirit (Matt.3:11).

When you ask for the Baptism of the Spirit you are to ask in faith, believing that Jesus will definitely impart the Holy Spirit. You receive the Spirit baptism by simple faith. If there is anything that you are holding on to that is not pleasing to God, any sin that you have not surrendered, it must be surrendered to God so that you will be free to receive the Baptism of the Spirit. Draw near to the Lord, with your heart cleansed by the blood of Jesus, and your conscience clear before God. Then you will have the freedom to believe, and receive the Baptism of the Spirit. Baptism in the Spirit is not an end; as believers we need to be filled with the Spirit often, with fresh infillings and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. The fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit is something we can believe for every day.

The blessing of the Spirit fulfills God's promise of blessing to Abraham. Therefore each dimension of the work of the Spirit represents a dimension of the blessing of the Lord. The blessing of the Lord is manifested in the fruit of the Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, and the moving of the Spirit. The blessing has power; it is the power of the Holy Spirit. Each of these dimensions of the work of the Spirit are to bring the blessing of the Lord into our lives, and to make us instruments of the blessing to those around us.

The Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23)

The blessing of the Spirit brings the fruit of love, joy, and peace into our lives. This fact alone should make the fruit of the Spirit the most precious and sought after treasure in the world. Who could want more than love, joy, and peace? But many are unwilling to surrender to Christ, that He may fill them with the precious fruit of the Spirit. Those who yield to Christ will experience His blessed fruit, the fruit that is produced by the Holy Spirit.

The fruit of the Spirit are a vital dimension of the blessing of the

Lord. The fruit of the Spirit will bring the inner blessings of peace, joy, and love into our lives. The fruit are to be experienced in our inner life; they are to be tasted and known by God's people. We can experience the peace of God; we can know the joy of the Lord; we can experience love in a powerful way. In our inner life, the fruit of the Spirit can be known in a healing and supernatural way. God brings His fruit to us to strengthen us with an inner strengthening. He brings His fruit to us, to strengthen and satisfy us as we walk with Him. Yes, there is satisfaction in walking with the Lord! He has promised us love, joy and peace, as an inner strength and satisfaction.

Love, joy, and peace are what the whole world is looking for. But they are trying to find peace in the wrong things; they are trying to find love in the wrong places; and they are trying to find happiness in the wrong pursuits. God's ways will bring us into peace; we can experience the fruit of the Spirit as we walk in His ways, and allow His fruit to abide within us. The inner blessing of the Lord will grow in our lives, as we believe for the blessing.

Manifesting the Fruit

The fruit of the Spirit are not only dimensions of God's blessing within us; the fruit of the Spirit are to be manifested to the world around us. The fruit of the Spirit are manifested as we allow the fruit to come forth from our lives, in concrete situations.

For example, kindness is a fruit of the Spirit that you can allow to be expressed through your life, in everyday situations. You can allow kindness to be manifested through you as you work with people every day. Your choices play a part, in allowing kindness to be expressed. Kindness is a fruit of the Spirit; kindness is also a command (Eph.4:32). So your choices are involved, in allowing the fruit of kindness to flow through you.

As you allow the fruit of the Spirit to be expressed through your

words and actions, the blessing of the Lord flows through you. The fruit of the Spirit is to bring the blessing of the Lord into the lives of people around you.

Love

Love is a fruit of the Spirit; love will flow through you as you choose to allow it to be expressed through your life. Your choice is involved; that is why love is a command, as well as a fruit (John 15:12). The greatest manifestation of love on this earth was when Jesus went to the cross, and forgave those who crucified Him. He said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Lu.23:34 KJV). He opened His heart and forgave those who wronged Him. Jesus chose to forgive; and love, the fruit of the Spirit, was manifested to the world.

Peace is another fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:22). The Holy Spirit brings us into peace, as we allow the peace of Christ to rule in our hearts. We must choose to allow peace to rule within us. Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled." (John 14:27 KJV). As we choose to not *allow* our hearts to be troubled, the peace of God can abide within us and strengthen us. The peace of God will minister to people around us as well, as we keep ourselves in the peace of God.

Paul and Silas experienced the fruit of peace and joy, when they were in prison. They worshipped the Lord; peace and joy were poured out upon them. They chose to sing; the fruit of the Spirit was manifested to the other prisoners. The blessing of the Lord came into that situation, and touched the other prisoners in a powerful way.

The blessing of the Lord comes into your life through the fruit of the Spirit. The blessing of the Lord also becomes evident to the world, as you allow the fruit of the Spirit to be manifested through your life. You must choose to allow the fruit of the Spirit to be

manifested in your life. Part of your calling is to go to the Lord often, to drink of the water of life so that you can have the resources of the Spirit. Time in private with the Lord leads to fruit that is expressed in public! As you come to Jesus and drink, the rivers of living water will flow from your innermost being (Jn.7:38). The fruit of the Spirit will be evident in your life; and as you choose to allow it, the fruit of the Spirit will be expressed through you to touch others. This places a responsibility and a privilege upon you; your own choices will determine how much the fruit of the Spirit will be expressed through you, to minister to people around you. Will they see the flesh, or the fruit of the Spirit? The choice is really yours.

The Gifts of the Spirit

The gifts of the Spirit (I Cor.12:7-11) are another avenue God uses to bring His blessing into people's lives. Each of the gifts of the Spirit brings a dimension of God's blessing, to touch people in need. For example, the gift of healing (I Cor. 12:9) brings the blessing of the Lord into people's lives. To experience God's healing touch is a blessing that strengthens and restores people who are suffering. As we pray for people to be healed, the gift of physical healing can be manifested, to touch them with the healing love of Christ. The blessing of health is a precious blessing; the gift of supernatural healing is given to restore that blessing.

Another gift, the gift of faith (I Cor. 12:9), can be given to you in a particular situation to strengthen you supernaturally and to give you confidence concerning God's plan and purpose for you. A gift of faith can strengthen and sustain you, so that God's plan of blessing can be fulfilled in your life. This faith is a deep inner assurance that the Holy Spirit gives you. This gift will also enable you to help others, as you are enabled to fulfill God's purpose for your life.

There are times that you face impossible situations, with seemingly no way out. God can impart a working of miracles, to meet your needs and the needs of those around you. The working of miracles is what met the needs of the people of Israel in the wilderness, time after time. They experienced the blessing of the Lord through the working of miracles. The working of miracles was also evident in the ministry of Jesus as the 4,000 and the 5,000 were fed. And the working of miracles is still to be evident today in the lives of believers (I Cor.12:10). Thank God, that He is still working miracles today!

The word of wisdom (I Cor.12:8) is a gift of the Spirit that God gives you to impart wisdom so that you can handle a specific situation, in His way. The word of wisdom can be used to keep you in the path of God's blessing for your life, as God gives you His wisdom from above. The supernatural wisdom of the Spirit is powerful guidance. Remember that each of the gifts of the Spirit are given to meet people's needs. The blessing of the Lord can be given, through the gifts of the Spirit. We are encouraged to seek the gifts of the Spirit (I Cor.12:31). As we seek these gifts God can use us as instruments of His blessing to other people, and our needs can be met as well.

We should believe, for the imparting of the gifts of the Spirit. God gives His Spirit and works miracles among us, because we believe (Gal.3:5). An attitude of faith and expectancy allows God to intervene in our lives; God will impart the gifts of the Spirit to meet our needs, to strengthen the Body of Christ, and to touch the world around us.

Differences Among Believers Concerning the Holy Spirit

Good people have differed, regarding some aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit. What is important is that we each seek to walk in the light of God's Word, walking humbly with Christ. We must walk humbly, seeking to walk in the blessing of the Spirit,

according to the light we have from God's Word. We need to remember that the Holy Spirit will never lead us to do something that is contrary to God's Word. We must also recognize that sincere believers differ in their understanding of some of the ways that the Holy Spirit works. We must completely avoid a divisive, fault-finding or critical spirit towards brothers and sisters in Christ who may differ from us. Such attitudes would block the blessing of the Lord from our lives, even if we were theologically more correct than the brothers or sisters we were criticizing!

We can thank God, for how He is blessing those who may differ from us. Is God blessing the church down the street? Are people finding Christ there? Are people there growing in their Christian life? Then we can thank God, for how He is blessing them! We need every possible channel of blessing, to touch this world for Christ. We should rejoice, for how God is blessing believers from other Bible-based churches; we should be praying for one another, and believing together for the blessing of the Lord to come upon our land.

The Moving of the Spirit

The Holy Spirit is compared to the blowing wind; He is also compared to a moving river (John 3:8, 7:38,9). This speaks of the moving of the Spirit in our lives. The Holy Spirit is moving; He is moving in a definite direction! As we understand the direction the Spirit is moving, it will help us to see how God is working in our lives. The Spirit is moving, and we can step into the flow of the Spirit, as we set our hearts to follow the direction He is moving.

How is the Spirit moving? First of all, the Spirit will move you in the direction of prayer. The Holy Spirit is moving people to pray, all over the world. You are to "pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests" (Eph.6:18 NIV). If you want to know how the Spirit is moving, you can be assured that He is seeking to move you into prayer. He moves you into prayer

in order to accomplish new and powerful things in your life, and in the lives of people around you.

The Holy Spirit is also moving you in the direction of love. The Holy Spirit today will surely be moving you to love your brothers and sisters in Christ. He is moving us to forgive one another! He is moving us to strengthen the love we have for one another. The Holy Spirit will always be moving you in the direction of love. Are you hindering the flow of love? Then you must love and forgive; otherwise, you block the precious Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is moving you into truth, as well. Part of His work is to guide you into the truth, which will set you free (John 16:13, 8:31,32). The Holy Spirit will use the Word of God to reveal truth to you. That is why it is so important to study, and meditate upon the Word of God. The Holy Spirit will reveal convicting truth, so that you will turn away from self, and carnal ways. He does this so that your sinful nature will not block you from the flow of God's blessing. The convicting truth of God's Word is good for you, because it will turn you from wrong attitudes and carnal ways.

The Holy Spirit will also reveal *encouraging* truth, to strengthen you and build you up in your walk with God. The truth of God's Word will strengthen your faith, and guide you in a positive direction. The truth will lead you into a deeper and richer relationship with Christ; the truth will lead you to treasures of God's character and God's love. The blessing of the Lord will be upon you, as you know and walk in the truth.

The Holy Spirit will move upon you to share God's truth with other people; If you are willing, He will move through you to witness, and lead people towards Christ. The Holy Spirit will open doors for you, to share God's Word. We must be open and ready for the opportunities He gives us, to share the Word and lead others to Christ.

The Spirit is moving today to bring people to Christ, all over the world. The power of the Spirit comes upon us today to enable us to be witnesses for Christ. The Holy Spirit will work to bring people to Christ, right up to the time that Christ returns. We can be assured that the Spirit will work through us to lead others to the Lord, if we are willing vessels.

Another part of the working of the Holy Spirit is that the Spirit will move to free you from the barriers of self, and circumstances. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (2Cor.3:17), and God wants you to have freedom from the hindrances of self, and circumstances. The Holy Spirit works within you, to bring you into inner liberty. He works within you through the Word, and through worship and prayer, to bring you into that precious freedom of your heart and soul. He wants you to be free from the controls of circumstances. He moves you into liberty, so that you can freely love God and love your neighbor. You are free to believe for this liberating work of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit will also move you closer to Christ; it is the work of the Holy Spirit, to draw you to Christ. He will reveal the treasures of Christ to you. He will reveal the work of Christ upon the cross; and He will reveal the glory of the risen Christ to you. The Spirit will draw you to Christ, to love Him, trust Him, and know Him. The Holy Spirit is always moving towards Christ; so He will always move you closer to Christ, as well.

The Spirit will always move you away from the things of the carnal or sinful nature. He will move to lift you above them, with His supernatural help. As you walk in the Spirit, you will not fulfill the desires of the carnal nature (Gal.5:16). The Holy Spirit will always be moving you away from the desires of the sinful nature, and He will always be working to strengthen you in holy desires. He will move to lead you in God's ways.

We must choose to follow the direction the Spirit is moving; and we must choose not to follow the desires of the sinful nature. Then the Spirit will work clearly through us; and He will move us away from the blockages of the sinful nature, so that God can pour out His blessing upon us, and through us. As we deny the flesh, the Spirit will move us into new expressions of His life.

The moving of the Spirit also applies to all of the fruit and the gifts of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit will move through you in expressions of the fruit, and the gifts. He will work in gifts and in fruit to meet your needs, and to meet the needs of people around you. In these and other ways, the Spirit is definitely and clearly working. We must follow, in the direction He is moving! The blessing of the Lord will be upon us as we follow the direction of the Spirit, and allow Him to work and move in our lives as He desires to. The Holy Spirit will work through us to bring the blessing of the Lord into fuller and fuller expression. The outcome is that Jesus will be glorified.

We are to set our hearts in the direction that the Spirit is moving, and follow His leading. So set your heart fully toward the direction that the Spirit is moving. Follow Him, into a new dimension of living! There is another dimension, a dimension which this world does not know about. It is the dimension of life in the Spirit. It means living life on another plane, because you are able to depend upon the supernatural life of the Spirit. So ask and believe for the great blessing, the blessing of the Spirit. Come to the Lord often, and drink of the promised blessing. Believe for a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit that will fill you, and flow through you in all of His precious ways.

CHAPTER 7

A Channel Of Blessing

One of the most important dimensions of the blessing of the Lord is that we are to be channels of blessing. The blessing of the Lord must flow through us, to touch people in need. We are "pipelines" for the blessing of the Lord to flow through. The moment we become selfish, and begin to hoard the blessing to ourselves, we block the channel. The blessing of the Lord must flow through open channels; an open channel has a receiving end, to receive from God. And it has a giving end, to pour out what it has received.

The self-centered philosophies of our day, and the self-centered teachings found in the Body of Christ today, are a great hindrance to the blessing of the Lord. We do not "give in order to get," as some have wrongly taught; we give in order to see God's blessing poured out in the world. We must seek to become greater channels and instruments of the blessing of the Lord. Psalm 67:1,2 reveals the right attitude for seeking the Lord's blessing: "God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us; that Thy ways may be known upon the earth, Thy saving help among all nations." (KJV)

The blessing of the Lord is sought, so that His ways may be known on the earth. The blessing of the Lord is given, to glorify the Lord and draw people unto Him. It is not to satisfy our selfish desires for more material things, more recognition, or a life of ease. As we seek to be true vessels of blessing, the Lord will be glorified and people will be drawn unto Him; the blessing of the Lord is not given to satisfy our selfish desires. Those who have been greatly used to bring God's blessing to others have always been great givers: selfless people who have sought to be a greater channel of the blessing of the Lord, to bring glory to His name.

As we seek to become greater channels of the blessing of the Lord, He will make us instruments of blessing to others. We are His channels, but God is the source of the blessing. Without His

blessing we could do nothing. But He can take our prayers, our resources, our words and our deeds, and pour out His blessing upon them so that they impact the world in a powerful way, with eternal results. We can rely upon God's promise of blessing as we seek to do what pleases Him. What are some ways that we can become more effective, as vessels who carry the blessing of the Lord?

Prayer

Whenever you pray, you can be an instrument of blessing to others. In prayer you receive from God. You receive for your own needs, and you receive life, power and grace to minister to other people. And whenever you interceded in prayer for others, you become a vessel of blessing in God's hands. The power of prayer is incredible. You can pray for nations, governments, and lands, as well as the neighbors who live next door. Every time you pray in intercession, you become a channel of blessing for God to work through.

So much can be accomplished in prayer; if we could see into the spiritual realm and see the power of the blessing that is unleashed through prayer, we would all be deeply challenged and moved to live a life of prayer. There are great needs all around us, and God wants to use each of us as instruments of His blessing, through prayer. The more prayer, the more the blessing flows. We can become great instruments of blessing in God's hands, through a life of prayer.

Loving

It is love that will minister God's blessing; God calls us to be channels of love, both giving and receiving from His awesome supply. We receive God's unconditional love through Christ. We can receive love from His infinite supply. The moment you open your heart to God's infinite love, He is there to meet you. He will

pour in His love. In fact, if you could receive all of the love God has for you, you would be taken to glory! God's love is infinite; if we just open our heart, He pours in as much as we can receive.

We are mistaken if we think that God is somehow unwilling to give us His love. The only hindrance is on our side. The more we open our hearts to Him, the more we can receive. As an older saint once said, "Sometimes I just sit still and let God love me." We need to learn to let God love us; we need to open our hearts in a greater way, to His infinite love. Then He can pour in more and more of His love.

God is our source of love. We love, because He first loved us (I Jn 4:19). We love, because of the love we have received. We need to become greater receivers of God's love. When we receive more of God's love, we can also become greater channels of His love; it is the power of love that can touch this world.

A great channel of love is someone who is filled with God's love, and then loves God and loves all people out of the overflow of that love. We can become greater channels of God's love: not only receiving love, but giving it as well. To love God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to truly love your neighbor as yourself: That is what it means to be a great channel of love.

We must seek to become greater givers of love. If you want to be a greater channel of love, the giving end must be wide open. It is not easy to keep the channel open, with love flowing out of your heart all of the time. It is a great challenge, to keep the channel open and to keep loving people. You can easily block the flow of love, by not giving it away; this is especially true, when someone has deeply hurt or offended you. You can easily begin to hold back your love, and keep it to yourself. But love that is concealed is not good (Prov.27:5). Do not allow the channel to stay blocked: open it wide, giving love to God and to the people

around you!

Forgiving Others

You must also become a greater channel of God's forgiveness. His forgiveness is a powerful blessing; you receive the blessing of forgiveness, through faith in Christ. The forgiveness you receive is undeserved; God in His great love and mercy forgives all of your sins.

This blessing is not something you can hoard; in fact the Lord commands you to forgive others, with the same kind of forgiveness that you have received from God. You then become a channel of forgiveness.

In the Lord's Prayer, we pray, "forgive us our trespasses, AS we forgive those who trespass against us." (Matt.6: 12). If we do not forgive others, we block the channel of God's forgiveness toward us. Forgiveness is a blessing that must be passed on to those who have wronged us. God has forgiven us; we must forgive others. There is power in forgiving people. Forgive and release them, and the blessing of the Lord will be poured out. His blessing flows through forgiving hearts.

The Ministry of the Spoken Word

We can be great instruments of blessing, through the words that we speak to people. Our words can encourage, help, and bless people; or they can have the opposite effect. We must choose to speak words that minister life to people, so that God can make us a channel of blessing to those around us.

The Holy Spirit comes upon us, to enable us to witness for Christ (Acts 1:8). The words that we speak can change lives, when it is God's Word that guides and inspires what we are speaking. God's Word, spoken with the power and guidance of the Spirit, will

have a powerful effect. God's Word is like a seed that can grow in a person's life, producing a great crop of blessing (Lu.8:8,15). If your words lead a person to Christ, that life has been forever changed. That person receives the gift of forgiveness and enters upon a life of blessing in Christ, all because of the words of life that you have shared.

God has planned to bring His blessing to the ends of the earth, through the good news of Jesus Christ. Amazingly, He has entrusted this message of His love to human vessels. As we share the good news of Jesus Christ, God can bring His promise of blessing to the ends of the earth.

We must not underestimate the power of the words we speak. May God make each of us a channel of blessing, through the words we speak to people! As we spend time with God and ask Him to empower and use our words, He will speak His blessed Word through us. The words we speak will minister grace to those who hear us (Eph.4:29). People can be won to Christ, through our words; those with weak faith can be strengthened by our words.

Our words can turn someone from danger and sin; our words can bring comfort to someone who is suffering. Our words can help remove someone's fear; our words can give instruction in God's ways. In many ways, we can be channels of blessing to those around us through the words that we speak.

Works of Compassion

In our actions toward other people we can be channels of blessing as well. God wants to use each of us as an instrument of blessing to people in need. It is not only our words, but also our deeds that give God an opportunity to use us to bring His blessing to hurting people. Jesus describes how we can be instruments of blessing: "For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited

me in; naked, and you clothed me; I was sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me." (Matt.25:35,6, NASB).

What we do for people in need, we are doing for Christ Himself. The hungry need food; the thirsty need water. The naked are in need of clothing, and the strangers need someone who will welcome them in. The sick and the prisoners need someone who will go and visit them. All of these people are hurting people, who need someone to care. Christ is present with the hurting, the starving, and the strangers. They are made in His image, and what we do to them we are doing unto Christ. What we have done unto the least of them, we have done unto Him.

As you minister to those in need, God gives you this promise: "And if you give yourself to the hungry, and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then your light will rise in darkness, and your gloom will become like mid-day. And the Lord will continually guide you, and satisfy your desire in scorched places, and give strength to your bones; and you will be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters do not fail." (Isaiah 58:10,11 NASB).

When we give waters to the thirsty, our life will be like a spring. The living waters will flow through us, satisfying the hungry, the strangers, the sick, and the prisoners. The Lord will continually guide us, and will satisfy us. He will strengthen us, with living waters.

Our actions and our giving can meet the needs of hurting people. God wants to use each of us as channels of His blessing, to touch a world of need. Too often the church has been imbalanced, with some focusing almost entirely on the words of the gospel, and others focusing almost entirely on the deeds of the gospel. Our words and our deeds are both vitally important, if we are to impact the world in the way God intended.

The River of the Spirit

Jesus revealed what it means to have the river of the Spirit flowing through us, in the passage recorded in John 7:37-39: "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'" "But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive." (John 7:37-39a, NASB).

We must receive, to have the Spirit flowing through us. We receive the Spirit when we come to Jesus, and drink. We can drink from Him, and receive the Spirit from His fullness. It is a blessed thing, to come to Jesus and drink of the water of life. Our thirst can be met, and fully satisfied by Christ alone. Jesus said, "He who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." (John 6:35 NASB).

When we come to Christ, He satisfies our thirst. He meets our deepest need. Then, because we have received of His Spirit, we have an overflow of life to minister to others. When we believe in Him and receive of His Spirit, rivers of living water begin to flow from within us (Jn 7:38). The living waters flow out, in an overflow of life.

It is a blessed thing, to have the Holy Spirit flowing through your life. Then you can minister out of that overflow of life, rather than simply trying to serve God in your own strength. As a vessel you receive the Spirit; then you minister out of the overflow of the Spirit in your life. You must come to Jesus often, to drink. Then you can minister to others, with the overflow of what you have received from Christ.

When you come to Christ, you are free to believe for the satisfaction of the Spirit. He promised to satisfy you and to fill

you to overflowing; you must simply believe. It is not your striving or your performance that brings the Spirit; it is coming to Christ, asking, and believing Him. The living waters will flow from within you, to minister to people's needs. Your words will be guided by the Spirit; your actions will be motivated by love, the fruit of the Spirit.

Blockages

As an illustration, a river and a channel have essentially the same purpose: to provide a "track" for water to flow through. A channel or a river can be blocked, and at times we allow things to block us up, so that the Spirit is unable to flow through us freely. If we harbor resentments or unforgiveness towards anyone, it blocks the channel. The channel is blocked by the boulders of unforgiveness. When we forgive and forget, the channel is opened up again, and God's Spirit can flow through us.

Also, our lack of prayer can block the flow of the river of God's Spirit. If you don't come to Jesus often to drink, He is unable to pour the Holy Spirit into your heart and life. The channel becomes blocked. Because there is such a world of need, and because there is such need in our own lives, there will only be a sufficient supply of the Spirit if you come to Jesus often, to drink of Him. To drink often, even continually, is your source of strength. Then you can minister to those in need out of the overflow of the Holy Spirit.

Any form of sin or selfishness can also block the channel, so that the Holy Spirit is unable to flow through our lives as He desires to. Anger, hardness of heart, materialistic goals, jealousy, sexual sin, or pride; each in its own way will block the channel, and prevent the Holy Spirit from moving through us as He desires to. By confessing our sins and turning away from them, we receive cleansing, and the things that blocked us are removed. God restores us, so the river of the Spirit can flow through us once

again.

It seems that Satan always has his "beavers," who are attempting to block up the flow of the river of the Spirit. Circumstances, unbelief, negative people, the "flesh" - each can potentially block the flow. We need to break apart the blockages, so the river of the Spirit can flow freely once again.

The Surrendered Life

It is the surrendered life that becomes a great channel, a vessel for the blessing of the Lord. We all desire to see the blessing of the Lord poured out in our world. But setting aside our own will, our own desires and our own pleasures to become a greater instrument of God's blessing is another matter. Those who have been great instruments of the Lord's blessing have always been people who have lived a surrendered life.

It is as if God were saying, "You have received My blessing upon your life, simply by believing. I have forgiven you and accepted you, all by my grace. All that I have is now yours. But to be a channel of my blessing to others, you must set aside your own self and become like my Son, who poured out His life in ministry to others."

In being a channel of blessing, we are blessed also. He who waters others will also be watered himself. "He who refreshes others will himself be refreshed." (Prov. 11:25 NIV). As we become channels of blessing, the Lord replenishes us, restores us, and strengthens us; otherwise we would soon have nothing to give. God is the source; we are simply instruments. We must focus on being an instrument of blessing, so that the blessing of the Lord can flow through us, to touch other lives. God will restore and strengthen us; He will pour His blessing back into us, in an abundant supply. Then we can continue to be vessels of His

blessing.

There are many ways that we can become greater channels of the blessing. The world is reeling under the curse of sin; the need is overwhelming. God wants to make us greater instruments of His blessing, to impact the world in a powerful way.

The power of the blessing of the Lord is able to change the course of nations, and can affect the eternal destiny of multitudes of people. The power of the blessing is still going to impact this world in a far greater way than we have imagined. God wants to make each of us a greater channel of His blessing through our words, our deeds, our prayer, our giving, and our love. We must reckon upon the power of the blessing in our lives.

As we seek to be greater channels of the blessing of the Lord, we must also continue to believe: believe for the power of the blessing that will be far greater than anything we can ask, think, or deserve! We must believe for the power of the blessing to be poured out upon our world.

CHAPTER 8

The Blessing Of The Lord And Prayer

God pours out the blessing, in answer to prayer. The prayer of faith will be answered; God will send His blessing. It is no accident that God has been issuing an urgent call to prayer throughout the Body of Christ. If God's people will humble themselves and pray, and seek His face, God will send the power of the blessing to bring revival and cleansing.

Our prayer should be, "Oh Lord, rend the heavens and come down! Send the power of your Spirit, and turn people's hearts toward you in a new revival. Send the power of the blessing that will turn people from their wicked ways. Revive us, O Lord! Revive your people, in a new hunger for you, a new brokenness, a new faith!"

"Lord, bring healing to our land. Bring healing to the Body of Christ. Restore the power of the Spirit, which we once walked in. Heal the hurting and broken, and save the lost! Bring a Spirit of cleansing upon the church, and deliver us from the bondages of this world. Restore the power of the blessing, to turn millions of people towards You in mighty revival and restoration. We must have your power and blessing. Send it, Lord!"

We must be as Jacob, who wrestled all night with God for the blessing. He refused to give up. He refused to let go. He said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." And God blessed him there (Gen.32:26-9). Jesus was sent to bless us, by turning us from our wicked ways (Acts 3:26). We must pray and believe for this blessing - the power of the Holy Spirit that will move upon people to turn wholeheartedly to the living God.

We need an army of Jacobs, praying and refusing to give up. We must pray until the blessing comes. As we see evil increasing, and sin abounding more and more, may a holy love and conviction seize us; we are going to pray for revival and repentance, until God's Holy Spirit breaks through and brings powerful renewal and revival. The Holy Spirit will draw people to Christ, and exalt Christ powerfully, so that people can find Christ and be transformed through their relationship with Him.

Before the day of Pentecost, the church waited in the upper room, and prayed. For a period of about 10 days, they waited on the Lord. Jesus had told them to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49). The church today

must return to the upper room to wait in God's presence and pray, until we receive a new baptism of the Holy Spirit and a fresh Pentecost. We must tarry and believe until there is a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit, an outpouring upon all flesh. It is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that will bring people to repentance and turn people to Christ.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit also anoints us, to minister the Word of God to people. It is the Word of God, spoken with the anointing of the Holy Spirit, that has the power to change lives. We must have a new baptism of the Holy Spirit, to enable us to speak God's Word with anointing and love to the people around us. As we ask for the outpouring of the Spirit we must also be willing vessels, to speak God's Word.

Seasons of Prayer

Jesus walked in the fullness of the blessing of the Lord. All of His words and deeds were clothed with power. The full measure of the blessing of the Lord flowed through His life. He had constant communion with His Father; words of prayer and fellowship with the Father flowed through His life. In addition to His daily communion and prayer with the Father, He also withdrew from the crowds at times, to spend extended seasons of prayer. Luke records one such time: "And in those days He went out into the mountain to pray, and continued all night in the prayer of God." (Lu.6:12, J. Wesley transl.).

He had a precious season of prayer and communion with the Father. He prayed with the help of the Holy Spirit, praying the prayers of God. If Jesus, the Son of God, needed such times of communion and prayer, how much more do we? The blessing of the Lord will flow through our lives in new richness and power, when we spend extended seasons of prayer and fellowship with our heavenly Father.

In addition to praying for revival, we should pray concerning every aspect of our lives. Prayer brings God onto the scene! Prayer brings the blessing of the Lord upon us, and upon those we pray for. A life of prayer is a life of blessing, and God will make us channels of blessing to the world around us, as we pray. Ephesians 6:18 says, "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints." (NIV). As we pray for people's needs and as we intercede for God's people, the blessing of the Lord will come upon them in answer to our prayers.

The life of prayer is the life of blessing. Praying with the help of the Holy Spirit will surely bring the blessing of God. The more Spirit-led prayer, the more blessing! God wants to send His blessing upon the land; He is looking for praying, believing people, who will pray and open the floodgates of His blessing. Prayer must be accompanied by a humbling of ourselves, and a turning from sin. If we humble ourselves and pray, and seek His face, God will send healing upon our land (2 Chron.7:14).

Healing of Relationships

Another dimension of the blessing of the Lord and prayer is in the restoration of relationships. In the home and in the Body of Christ today, there is a great need for the healing of relationships. God's blessing can bring healing and restoration, in answer to prayer. When Jacob wrestled with God in prayer for the blessing, the crisis he was facing was a relationship crisis. His brother Esau was coming, with four hundred armed men (Gen.32:6-8). Jacob and Esau had been divided by a conflict in the family, years before. Because of this conflict Jacob had fled to live in the region of Paddan Aram. Now, years later, Jacob was returning to his homeland. But Esau was coming to meet him, with four hundred men.

In this situation, Jacob wrestled with God for the blessing. He

needed a miracle, the healing of a relationship. In his prayer, Jacob relied upon the promise of blessing which God had given him. Jacob confessed his unworthiness (Gen.32:10), but relied upon God's promise; God had promised to prosper him, and to make his descendants as numerous as the sand on the seashore (Gen. 32:12). God's promise of blessing was the basis of Jacob's prayer. Jacob refused to let go of the Lord, until the Lord blessed him (Gen.32: 26-9). Finally, when the dawn was about to break, the blessing came (v29).

The next day, Jacob came to his brother Esau: "Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept." (Gen.33:4 NASB). There was a beautiful reconciliation, between the two brothers. Today there are many relationships that need mending. We must wrestle in prayer, relying upon God's promise of blessing. The power of the blessing can heal relationships, restoring unity in the Body of Christ and in the home.

The blessing of the Lord has great power. But how many are willing to pray all night through, if necessary, until the blessing comes? God wants to bring His blessing into our relationships, to bring healing and unity among all of His people. He will use us as instruments of His blessing, as we desire unity and pray for the blessing to come upon our relationships.

Jabez and the Blessing

Prayer brings the Lord's blessing upon our life, to protect, guide, and enlarge us. Jabez was a man who prayed for the blessing of the Lord upon his life: "Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, "Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain." And God granted his request."(I Chron.4:10 NIV).

(1) Jabez asked for the blessing of the Lord upon his life He knew

that the blessing of the Lord was what he needed.

(2) He asked for enlargement. We can also ask for enlargement—more love, more grace, more effective ministry, more fruitfulness, and an expanding of our boundaries.

(3) He asked that God's hand would be upon his life. We must also have God's hand upon our lives to strengthen us, guide us, and bless us

(4) He asked for protection. God's hand upon his life was a protecting hand.

"And God granted his request." (v10). God will answer our prayer for His blessing. The blessing of the Lord on your life enables you to be a blessing to others, so if that is your purpose it is not selfish to ask for the blessing of the Lord upon your life. Jabez asked for the Lord's blessing, and God answered him.

Seeking the Lord

Of King Uzziah, it is said that as long as he sought the Lord, God prospered him (2 Chron.26:3). He was a man who sought the Lord. He spent much time in prayer; his praying was not limited to a few minutes in the day. Prayer was central to his life. And as long as he sought the Lord, God prospered him. The blessing of the Lord rested upon his life, and his labors.

As the head of the government of Israel, he had many demands upon his time. He carried a great deal of responsibility. Yet he kept seeking the Lord, and made prayer his highest calling. The distractions and difficulties did not keep him from prayer.

We must make prayer our highest calling. Though many things crowd into our lives, and seek to occupy our time, we must make sure that seeking the Lord is our highest priority. The blessing of

the Lord will flow through our lives as we seek the Lord's presence day by day, and make prayer our most important ministry.

Prayer brings the blessing of God. God wants to use each of us as channels of blessing, through prayer. When we pray we must believe for the power of the blessing, that will turn people's hearts back to God (Acts 3:26). United, consecrated prayer will move God's hand and bring the power of His blessing from heaven.

In praying for the power of God's blessing to come upon our land, we must believe for the blessing. Those who have faith receive the blessing (Gal.3:9, Heb.11:6). We must persevere in prayer and faith, continuing to believe for the power of the blessing, even when circumstances seem impossible for revival.

In our country, sin and evil often seem to be triumphing. But that is exactly the time when God can send revival, and turn people from sin in powerful ways. Where sin abounds, grace will also abound (Rom.5:20). The power of the blessing will turn people from sin; God will work in powerful ways. We must lay hold of His promises, and pray until the blessing comes.

CHAPTER 9

The Blessing Of The Lord And Holiness

The blessing of the Lord is powerful; it is much more powerful than we realize. The blessing of the Lord is powerful enough to impact an entire nation; but when God's people compromise or trifle with sin, Satan is able to come in and strip God's people of the power of the blessing. We must have holiness, to safeguard the blessing of the Lord.

We cannot claim to deserve God's blessing. It is given by grace, to undeserving people. The blessing of the Lord is given by grace; but it can be lost by our neglect or our disobedience. God desires to bless us, and to make our lives a channel of blessing that will impact our nation and our world in a powerful way. We must not allow Satan to rob us of the power of the Lord's blessing. God's commandments are given to safeguard the blessing of the Lord, and to keep us strong in His ways.

Esau lost a powerful blessing, when he sold his birthright for a single meal. Hebrews 12:16 warns us, 'See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterwards, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears.' (NIV).

For a single meal, Esau sold his birthright to his brother Jacob. He lost a great and precious blessing, which he could never recover. Nothing he could do could bring the blessing back. For a single meal of sin, some are casting away precious and wonderful blessings of God. A drunken driver may accidentally kill someone; later on in his life he may turn to Christ and receive forgiveness. But the life that was lost can never be brought back. A precious life, a precious blessing, has been taken away. A woman who has an abortion may later repent, and be completely forgiven. But the blessing represented by that child can never be recaptured. She has lost a precious blessing, for a lifetime.

A child is born with AIDS, because her mother used drugs and used infected needles. What a tragedy! Though we shed tears, and weep for what has been done, these lives will probably still perish. Satan is out to steal, kill, and destroy - and it is only as people return to God's ways that the enemy's destruction can be stopped.

God's people have also lost innumerable blessings of the Lord, through compromise and sin. In the Body of Christ in recent years, Satan has stripped blessing after blessing away from God's people, because they have compromised with sin. Whether it be through sexual sin, love of material things, or bitterness and unforgiveness, sin has allowed Satan to rob God's people of the power of the blessing, time after time.

We must honestly say, 'Lord, as your people we have squandered and lost your blessings. Forgive us, for we are undone.' We have allowed the blessing of the Lord to slip from our fingers. The power of the blessing has been greatly reduced by our failings. We have not impacted the world as we could have. Even our prayerlessness- how many blessings have been lost, because God's people have not prayed! Forgive us, Lord, for how we have hindered your blessing from flowing out to a needy world!

We must return to God's altar in weeping and confession, for blessings that have been lost to the Body of Christ and our world. Prayerlessness, unforgiveness and resentment, sexual impurity and selfish ways have robbed the world of the blessing that could have been given. Blessings that could have impacted our world in a powerful way for Christ have been lost forever.

And yet, there is hope for restoration and revival, if we will truly take God's Word to heart: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and forgive their sins, and heal their land." (2 Chron. 7:14 KJV). God will bring the restoration of His blessing and power if we will humble ourselves and pray, and turn from our wicked ways. We must truly confess and forsake our sins, in repentance. If we will seek God's face, He will not turn away from us. The blessing of the Lord can be restored.

God's forgiveness is powerful; He will forgive us and cleanse us,

and restore His blessing in our lives. Even though there are blessings that may have been lost, a believer must not lose heart. God's greatest blessings can be restored: forgiveness, cleansing, and a deepening relationship with Christ; the healing of relationships; the assurance of eternal life, and the blessing of the Holy Spirit - all can be restored. God will restore His blessing in our lives, and make us instruments of His blessing once again.

We can learn from our failings, and increase our determination and commitment to walk in God's ways. We must walk humbly with God, knowing that it is possible to lose God's blessings if we follow sinful and carnal ways. We must walk in humility, knowing that it is possible to lose precious blessings. Not only that, but our failings can hinder other people from receiving the blessing of the Lord.

How many people have been hindered from receiving Christ, because they have seen the failings of God's people? We are channels of God's blessing, and we must not allow the blessing to be hindered, by our involvement in selfish and carnal ways. Our lives must give clear evidence of the transforming power of Christ, and the purity of His love. We must safeguard the blessing, for the sake of the people around us.

Safeguarding the Blessing

Psalm 24 speaks of holiness, and the blessing of the Lord: "Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. He will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God his Savior. Such is the generation of those who seek Him, who seek your face, O God of Jacob." (Ps.24:3-6 NIV).

He who has clean hands and a pure heart will receive blessing from the Lord. He who has clean hands and a pure heart will not

cast away the blessing, through compromise and sin. Therefore holiness is essential, to safeguard the blessing of the Lord. Without holiness, the blessing of the Lord will be stripped away from God's people by the results of sin.

With the inner motivation of love, we can follow God's commandments. God's commandments will keep us in the path of God's will, and His blessing. God wants us to keep His blessings; many of His commandments are designed to help us to do just that. They safeguard us, and keep us from destructive ways.

Idols and the Loss of Blessing

As God's people we cannot lift up our souls to an idol (Ps.24:4). Today there are idols that millions of people are lifting up their souls to. These idols are not idols of wood or stone; they are the idols of the heart. Whoever follows idols becomes defiled, and allows Satan to steal the blessings of the Lord from his or her life.

The Idol of Lust

The idol of lust and sexual sin is being worshipped and followed by many, many people in this country. Worshipping the idol of lust has led to the breakup of many marriages; following the lust-idol has led to the outbreak of new and terrible forms of venereal disease, AIDS, the use of abortions as a form of "birth control," sexual abuse of children, and many other destructive practices.

Believers are experiencing a barrage of temptation through television, videos, magazines, and other forms of media. The idol of lust is looking for followers. There is a seductive spirit that is attacking the church as never before, and we must realize the consequences of following the lust-idol. Following the idol of lust is a sure way to lose the blessing of God. Many, many blessings have been lost because of lust and sexual sin. Marriages have been destroyed, careers have been ruined, churches have been

devastated by this sin. Satan comes to steal, kill, and destroy, and the idol of lust is one of his chief weapons.

The Idol of Self

The idol of self can take many forms, because there are many ways that we can put self ahead of God. Putting self first will never lead to happiness or contentment, in spite of what anyone in our society says. Putting self first leads to conflict, and a lack of peace. Through self-will the blessing of the Lord has been lost, time after time.

In the church, self-will becomes apparent when people battle for a position; or when conflicts and strife arise over minor issues. Self-will leads to strife and conflict, even though the people involved may claim to be following God's will. Self-will, in one or both parties, is an element of every church battle.

How many churches have lost the blessing of God, because of conflict and strife? People demand their own way, and go to battle over minor issues. The only cure is repentance, and a turning away from all forms of self-will. Only with humility, forgiving one another, and a turning away from all self-will, can the blessing of the Lord be restored.

Self-will is contrary to the love of God, and can manifest itself in ways that we may not even be aware of. The love of position, love of men's applause or approval, or putting self ahead of other people's needs, are ways that self-will can become a problem. We can look righteous on the outside, and be doing things that appear to be acceptable, and still be motivated by self-will.

Self-will is also at the root of many problems in the home. Many marriages have been destroyed, because of self-will. When people become selfish and refuse to humble themselves, relationships are damaged. Self-will leads to conflict and strife, as marriage

partners become unwilling to forgive one another, and become unwilling to admit their own faults. Self-will must be conquered, to strengthen marriages and families; God will bring restoration and blessing, as we learn to conquer selfish ways.

Money

The idol of money and materialism is worshipped and followed by many people. It has rightly been called, "chasing the Almighty dollar." When people make money and material things their goal, the blessing of the Lord is gradually pushed out of the way. God is gradually forgotten, as more and more time and energy is spent on making money.

Through materialism people often cease to be a channel of blessing. Giving to the poor, tithing, and other forms of giving are neglected, because they "cannot afford it." People become attached to material things, and go to great lengths to hold on to their "things." Even among believers, the desire for material things draws people away from God's purposes. The subtle influence of money can sidetrack us from our focus on God's kingdom.

The Lure of Money

With the mushrooming numbers of gambling casinos and lotteries, many people are being drawn by the lure of instant wealth. They are bowing down to the idol of money and materialism. God's Word warns, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." (I Tim.6:10 NIV).

Those who are eager for wealth are contrasted with the faithful: "A faithful man will be richly blessed, but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished." (Prov.28:20 NIV). The blessing of the

Lord rests on those who are faithful to walk in God's ways. But those who set their hearts on wealth will lose God's blessing, and inherit sorrows instead.

Many individuals have awakened to the realization that they have wasted all of their time, energy, and commitment on making money, instead of focusing on what is really important. Their family, relationship with God, and other relationships have been neglected; their time for God, and their time for the people they love has been thrown away because their pursuit of money has robbed them of all of their time.

Drugs and Alcohol

Drugs and alcohol are controlling many people's lives. Rather than bowing to the Lord, these individuals are forced to bow down to a chemical because they have become enslaved to it, by repeated use.

Drugs or alcohol become the most important thing in their lives; as such it becomes a false god. This false god gives people a temporary pleasure, but hides the destructive consequences that follow. Rather than reaching for the Lord, a person will reach for a chemical to give them comfort. The chemical becomes a substitute for God.

Innumerable blessings have been lost, when people have followed the idols of drugs and alcohol. Families have been torn apart; thousands upon thousands of minds and bodies have been destroyed, by these idols. Billions of dollars are spent each year on drugs and alcohol; these idols are raised up over our society, with millions of people bowing down to them. The only effective cure has been genuine surrender to God: When people surrender their will and life to the Lord, He frees them from their bondage to drugs and alcohol. There is freedom in surrender.

These and other idols are towering over our society today. Millions of people are bowing down to these idols, the idols of money, self, sexual sin, drugs, and numerous other things. The influence of the idols in our land is great; power, money, and people are flowing into them. Some of God's people have turned aside to worship the idols, and have fallen.

The blessing of the Lord has been lost, whenever people have begun to worship idols. When people worship idols, they come under the curse instead of the blessing. Moses told God's people about the curse of idols and the blessing of the Lord:

"See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: The blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, which I am commanding you today; and the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I am commanding you today, by following other gods which you have not known." (Deut. 11:26-8 NASB)

Following idols leads to the loss of blessing; many are idols of the heart. God told Ezekiel, "Son of man, these men have set up idols in their hearts!" (Ezek.14:3a NIV). The people of Israel were deserting the Lord to worship idols, idols of the heart. God's Word to them was, "Repent! Turn from your idols and renounce all your detestable practices!" (Ezek.14:6 NIV).

God told His people to completely destroy the idols from the land. They were not to allow idols to have any place in their lives whatsoever. We must destroy the idols of the heart, totally casting them out of our lives. Following idols will cause us to lose the blessing of the Lord; the idols must be torn down. God will give us the power to do it.

Holiness and Love

Love must be the motivation of our hearts, for keeping God's commandments. Love, ruling and reigning in our hearts, is the secret of holiness. Love does no wrong to its neighbor; love will compel us to do what is good for our neighbor; therefore love will fulfill God's law (Rom. 13:10). God's commandments aren't a list of difficult duties; His commandments simply define what love is. Love doesn't steal from others; love doesn't kill another person. Love doesn't lie to others, or envy.

In a positive direction, love will feed the hungry; love will welcome in strangers; love will visit the prisoners and the sick; love will tell others about a dying Savior, who can give them eternal life. It is love that will empower us to fulfill all of God's commands.

In Deuteronomy, Moses revealed that even in the Old Testament, a loving relationship with God was at the heart of God's purposes, and would lead to the blessing: "I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the Lord your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it." (Deut.30:16 NASB). Love is the foundation, for God's blessing.

He continued, "I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the Lord your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life..." (Deut.30:19,20 NASB).

As God's love fills your heart, you will cling to Him, and follow His ways. Love will be your motivation, for following God's commandments. Your relationship of love to God will keep you in the path of the blessing. The blessing of His Spirit will be flowing through you, creating the precious fruit of the Spirit. The power of the blessing will be clearly evident in your life, lifting

you over difficulties, and enabling you to bear fruit. The blessing of the Lord will be upon you, bringing glory to God and enabling you to minister to people's needs. You will be a channel of blessing for the purposes of God.

CHAPTER 10

The Blessing Of The Lord And Repentance

How is the blessing of the Lord tied to repentance? To repent means to turn away from sin, and turn to God. The power of God's blessing is intended to turn us away from sin, and to turn us to God. Peter, speaking to his fellow Hebrews, declares the power of the risen Christ: "For you first, God raised up His Servant, and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways." (Acts 3:26 NASB). Jesus was raised up and sent to bless us. How is the power of that blessing to be manifested? By "turning each of us from our wicked ways." To receive Christ, and to continue to receive the power of His blessing, we must turn from our wicked ways. Jesus has the power to turn us; but we must also choose to leave wicked ways, and put them behind us. The power of God will help us and empower us, to break with our sins and walk in fellowship with Christ. Many people today are longing for freedom from their addictions and sins. That freedom is found in Christ.

When God's glory shines powerfully upon an individual, what is often the revelation that a person receives? It is the revelation of their sinful nature, in the light of God's glory. This is the first step in revival, cleansing, and a new work of God's Holy Spirit. Isaiah saw a vision of God's glory; the majesty of God's glory filled the temple. The angels cried, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Almighty. The whole earth is full of His glory." In the light of that glory, Isaiah cried, "Woe is me! I am undone! 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 6:3,5 NIV).

Isaiah saw his own sin nature, his imperfections, his shortcomings, his unclean speech. He cried, "Woe is me!" This is the true revelation of our sin nature, and our sins. Each one of us must take our place with Isaiah, acknowledging our sins and our sin nature. God's glory is here all around us, for the whole earth is full of His glory (v3). We must open our eyes to His glory; then we must also see our true condition, our sinful nature, as Isaiah did. (cf. Job 42:1-6).

But God did not leave Isaiah undone and cast down. God did not condemn him. Rather, a red, glowing coal was taken from the altar, and it touched Isaiah's lips. The angel said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin is atoned for." (v7). The red, glowing coal symbolizes the blood of Christ, by which we receive cleansing and forgiveness. We are cleansed and washed by the blood of Christ, to stand in the presence of God forgiven, and clothed in righteousness.

Then, after confession, repentance and cleansing, the Holy Spirit is able to empower us and move us forward. Isaiah was forgiven, cleansed, and then commissioned to go as an ambassador for the Almighty, to speak God's Word (Is.6:8-13). The Holy Spirit desires to move the people of God forward in this hour in the same way. First, there is a revelation of our sin, and our sin nature. This brings us to humbling, and confession. Then God reveals His compassion and cleansing. In faith we turn, and rely on the blood of Christ for cleansing. The Holy Spirit can then move through us in fresh power and love. God will move us forward in a new empowering of the Holy Spirit.

In the New Testament, Peter also saw a revelation of God's glory. When Jesus performed the miracle of the large catch of fish, Peter was amazed. He fell down at Jesus feet, and said, "Depart from

me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" (Luke 5:8 KJV). God's glory was revealed in the miracle that Jesus performed. In the light of that glory, Peter confessed his own sinfulness and unworthiness. But Jesus did not leave Peter overwhelmed by his unworthiness:

"Jesus said to Peter, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men." And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him." (Luke 5:10,11). Jesus called Peter, after Peter had felt so unworthy and sinful. Peter's response to Jesus was one of faith; he left everything else and began to follow Jesus.

Charles Finney, the great evangelist of the 1800's, said he could not go for more than a week or so without a fresh revelation of his sin nature. He was humbled in confession, and his heart was broken before the Lord in repentance. Then he received a new cleansing and grace, through the blood of Christ. The love and compassion of Christ filled his heart.

If Charles Finney, an instrument greatly used by God, needed such fresh revelations of his sin nature, how much more do we? Yet it is not to condemn us, that such revelation is given. It is to cleanse us, and enable us to overcome through the power of the Spirit. Confession of our sins, and the revelation of our selfish ways will enable God to bring cleansing. The power of the blessing will turn us from selfish ways, as we rely upon the cleansing blood of Christ and a new power of the Holy Spirit.

God desires to bring cleansing, and a new working of His Holy Spirit in our lives. But have we as Christians become too proud to confess and admit our faults? We can see the faults of others, but cannot admit our own. We can see when other people yield to their "flesh," but we have difficulty seeing how our own flesh hinders us, or hurts others.

We need fresh light from God, to see this. Then we must confess

our faults, and confess where we have yielded to self. The blood of Christ brings cleansing as confession is made, and as we turn from selfish ways. Then the Holy Spirit empowers us to live in the Spirit; the Spirit gives us new life and energy. In other words, revival! The dam that was blocking the flow of the Holy Spirit is removed, through the cleansing of the blood of Christ! As we walk in the Spirit, we will not yield to the sinful nature (Gal.5:16). The power of the blessing of the Lord will flow through us; we will be instruments of blessing, and people of love in the Spirit.

Praying for the Blessing of Repentance

We are to pray for the power of the blessing of the Lord, to enable us to turn from selfish ways. The power of the blessing is supernatural; Jesus will send the power of the blessing, to enable us to turn to Him, and leave self-centered ways behind. We must pray in faith, believing for the power of the blessing to come upon us.

In praying for the blessing of the Lord to be poured out upon the church and our world, we must pray for the power of the blessing, that will turn people from self and sinful ways (Acts 3:26). We must wrestle in prayer, until God sends a mighty blessing, that will turn the hearts of people back to Himself in repentance. We need nothing less than a mighty outpouring of God's Spirit, the power of the blessing, to turn our hearts back to God. It is the Holy Spirit who brings repentance, in answer to the prayer of faith.

CHAPTER 11

The Blessing Of Peace

"The Lord gives strength to His people; the Lord

blesses His people with peace."

(Psalm 29:11 NIV)

The blessing of peace is one of the most precious of God's treasures. God desires us to walk in His peace. Colossians 3:15 says, "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body." (NASB). We need to allow the peace of Christ to rule within our hearts. There are many things which seek our attention, seeking to occupy our thoughts and our time. But we must allow the peace of God, the settled peace and rest of the Lord to continue in our hearts. God desires to manifest His peace in our hearts, in all of our circumstances.

God has promised the blessing of peace- peace with God, peace within ourselves, and peace towards the people around us. It is a peace that God can give in the midst of trying circumstances. God's peace can abide within you as a strength, a stabilizing force, a peace which is rooted in God's own presence within you.

People in the world today are searching for something to give them peace, something that will bring them into contentment and rest - not realizing that peace is the gift of God. In Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus promised rest for our souls. He said, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." (NKJV). Jesus invites us to come to Him. Those who are weighed down with burdens and cares are invited to come to Jesus and to receive rest in their souls. As we come to Jesus and allow Him to rule within our hearts we will find rest for our souls. As we allow Jesus to direct and guide our lives, we begin to come into peace.

Many times we try to carry the burdens ourselves. We try to carry the weight of problems and difficulties upon our own shoulders, while Jesus is beckoning us to come to Him, to cast our burdens

on Him, and to receive the blessing of peace. We must allow Him to carry our burdens. There are things that Satan will attempt to use, to rob us of our peace. He will try to steal our peace, through things like: (1) fear of the future (2) worry (3) fear of circumstances (4) conflicts with people (5) past failures (6) fear of what people may say or think about us (7) financial pressures.

We cannot allow these "thieves" to steal our peace. The peace of God is a treasure that we must guard, and keep within our hearts. The Lord has promised to bless us with peace, and we must not allow Satan to take it away.

Jesus promised us peace when He said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful." (John 14:27 NASB). Jesus gave us a gentle command, when He said, "Let not your hearts be troubled." We are to refuse to allow the things around us to trouble our hearts. Too often we allow our hearts to be troubled; we become caught up in circumstances, the opinions of other people, or our own fears. We allow these things to stir up our hearts and trouble us; then we lose the gift of peace.

Another way we can lose the peace of God is through our own desires. We desire something, and cannot obtain it; then we begin to strive after it. Even good things can rob us of our peace, when we begin to desire them in place of the Lord. We must turn our desires over to the Lord, and surrender them to Him. Then the peace of God will again rule in our hearts. We can seek to do His will, and do things in God's way, and have the peace of God in our hearts.

Surrender and Peace

Surrender will bring us into peace. If we are not at peace, often it is because there is something we need to surrender to the Lord. Am I troubled about my possessions? Then I need to surrender

them to the Lord. Am I troubled because my position is threatened? Then I must surrender it into the hands of the Lord, and allow Him to sustain me, in the place He has for me. Am I troubled because of fear? Then I need to surrender that fear into the hands of the Lord. He will sustain me with His peace as I surrender my fear, and place it in His hands. Surrender leads to peace, and as we learn to surrender our burdens, cares, and fears, the peace of God will grow in our lives. The peace of God is a treasure that God wants us to have; His peace will sustain us and strengthen us, as we allow the Lord to have His way in our lives.

CHAPTER 12

Blessing In The Midst Of Trouble

The power of God's blessing is seen in the fact that God is able to pour out His blessing upon us even in the midst of trouble. In Psalm 23:5 David said, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." (KJV). David had experienced the blessing of the Lord even in the midst of opposition, and difficulty. He saw the Lord preparing a table of blessing before him even in the presence of his enemies. David was indeed a great channel of blessing to Israel; but there were great spiritual battles, and enemies to be overcome in the process. David had great confidence in the power of God's blessing, even though he faced many battles and difficulties along the way.

The blessing of the Lord does not mean that we will be free from trials or troubles or difficulties, but that God is able to manifest His blessing even in the midst of those times. The blessing of the Lord is able to overflow our lives through all the experiences we encounter. The blessing of the Lord can be manifested in spite of seeming setbacks or reversals, as long as we continue to walk in faith, and trust in God's power to bless.

In the Old Testament, Joseph is a clear example of God's blessing in the midst of trouble. Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, and was sent to Egypt. This was undoubtedly a very painful experience; it certainly didn't appear as if the blessing of the Lord was upon his life! But the Lord was with Joseph as he began to serve Potiphar, an officer of the Pharaoh. In spite of the tragedy of being sold into slavery and sent to a foreign country, the Lord prospered Joseph, and God's blessing was upon him as he served Potiphar. The blessing of the Lord was upon Joseph's life, much more than he realized. Soon Joseph was placed over Potiphar's household, and was put in charge of everything that Potiphar owned. In Genesis 39:5 it says, "The Lord blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph. Thus the Lord's blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field." (NASB). The blessing of the Lord was upon Joseph, and upon his employer, and everyone around him.

After this time of blessing Joseph was falsely accused by Potiphar's wife and as a result was thrown into prison. This unexpected setback was undoubtedly a very difficult and trying experience - picture yourself being falsely accused and thrown into prison, with no assurance that you would ever be released! But the Lord was with Joseph in prison, and the blessing of the Lord soon became evident there: "But the Lord was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer. And the chief jailer committed to Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in the jail, so that whatever was done there he was responsible for it. The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph's charge, because the Lord was with him, and whatever he did the Lord made to prosper." (Gen.39:21-3 NASB).

The blessing of the Lord was with Joseph in prison, even during a time of confinement and restriction. The power of God's blessing was clearly evident. Eventually, through a series of unusual events Joseph was released from prison and placed over Egypt as

the Pharaoh's chief administrator. Through the provisions that were made in Egypt through Joseph, God's people were provided for during a time of famine. The blessing of the Lord had powerful results, for Joseph and the people of God

Through all the difficult times and the good times in Joseph's life, the blessing of the Lord was powerfully evident. The blessing of the Lord did not cease, when there were setbacks or unexplainable difficulties in his life. Joseph refused to compromise with sin, to become bitter, or to rebel against God's ways through all of these experiences. There were some painful moments in Joseph's life, and trials and testings of his spirit. Yet through it all the blessing of the Lord was upon him. God wants us to have a deep confidence in the power of His blessing, through every experience we encounter.

Confidence in God's Blessing

In the New Testament we see that the Apostle Paul had an unshakable confidence in the blessing of the Lord. He wrote to the believers in Rome, saying, "I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ." (Romans 15:29 NIV). The blessing of the Lord was a concrete reality, a fact of God's power and grace that Paul had experienced and was fully confident in. Paul knew that wherever he went, he could believe for the full measure of the blessing of Christ. The Apostle was fully yielded to Christ, and the power of the blessing flowed through his life.

God wants each of us to have that same assurance and confidence concerning the blessing of the Lord. God wants us to know that the power of the blessing of the Lord will be upon our lives and flowing through us.

Paul knew. He said, "I KNOW that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ." (Rom.15:29). He

wasn't uncertain; he wasn't questioning or doubting. He had a deep confidence and assurance; he knew that the blessing was promised by God, and was being poured out richly through Jesus Christ. He knew that God was fulfilling the mighty blessing promised to Abraham, that would flow out to all the nations of the earth. And everyone who has faith is included in the promise of blessing.

Paul also knew that the blessing of the Lord was not something that people could deserve. It is promised to all who believe, and is based on God's grace. The blessing of the Lord is not deserved by anyone; it is given by God's mercy, and His Promise. "Only believe" is the foundation; the blessing of the Lord is poured out on all who believe in Christ, the Savior and soon coming King. Through faith we can walk in the full measure of the blessing of Christ.

The full measure of the blessing is what Paul walked in. He experienced not only a partial blessing, but the full measure of the blessing. The full measure of the blessing of the Spirit flowed through his life; God wants the full measure of the blessing to be upon each of us, as well. He desires to use each of us as yielded, devoted instruments of His blessing. What an awesome calling we have, to walk in the full measure of the blessing of Christ.

The blessing of the Lord is promised to those who believe. Those who have faith are blessed (Gal.3:9). Paul had an unshakable confidence, and faith in the promise of the blessing of the Lord. We can also believe with a strong confidence, even when circumstances seem to contradict the promise of blessing. To keep believing when circumstances have blocked you in and there seems to be no way out - that is the faith that will break through, and receive the full measure of the blessing of Christ.

It is amazing to observe Paul's confidence, when you consider the many trials and difficulties he went through. He was persecuted,

and driven out of cities; he was whipped with the thirty-nine lashes, on five separate occasions (2 Cor. 11:24); he was imprisoned; he was beaten with rods; at times he faced opposition from false brethren (2 Cor. 11:26).

Yet through it all, Paul had an amazing confidence. He knew that nothing could separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus his Lord (Rom.8:39). And he was full of confidence in the power of Christ's blessing (Rom. 15:29). Over and over again, he saw the blessing of the Lord being poured out. Nothing could stop him from believing in the power of the blessing. The blessing of the Lord grew and was multiplied in his life, even through times of trial and testing. God's promise of blessing is for every believer, and we can grow in confidence and assurance, knowing that God's will is to bless us and make us channels of blessing that will impact lives around us. We must seek to walk in the full measure of the blessing of Christ.

On one memorable occasion Paul stood on trial before King Agrippa. Paul was a prisoner in chains, on his way to Rome. Yet he was confident enough to tell the story of Jesus Christ to this powerful king, and said, "I pray to God that whether in a short or a long time not only you but also all those who are listening to me today could become such as I am, except for these chains." (Acts 26:29 NET). Think of the irony of this situation: Paul, a prisoner – having nothing but the clothes on his back, and perhaps a parchment or two; across from him stood the king, clothed in majestic robes, having all of the wealth, power and influence that this world has to offer. Yet Paul said, "King, I wish you had what I have!" Remarkable confidence! Paul had the peace of God, a treasure that all the money in this world cannot buy. Paul had a deep assurance of God's love, knowing that nothing could separate him from the love of Christ. And he wanted the king to know this matchless Christ, and to be forgiven of his sins.

God is well able to manifest His blessing even in the midst of

troubles and difficulties. Our troubles will even bring us to the blessing of the Lord. Our heavenly Father wants us to have confidence in His power to bless, provide, and care for us, even in the midst of difficult and perplexing circumstances. Not only that, our Lord wants to make us channels of His blessing to the people around us, manifesting His love and grace even in the times of uncertainty and testing. He will spread a banquet table of blessing before us, even in the presence of our enemies (Psalm 23:5).

Blessed in the Wilderness

The people of Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years, before they entered the Promised Land. Even during the time they were in the wilderness they experienced the blessing of God. At the end of the forty years, Moses said, "For the Lord your God has blessed you in all that you have done; He has known your wanderings through this great wilderness. These forty years the Lord your God has been with you; you have not lacked a thing." (Deut.2:7 NASB). Even during their wilderness experience, the blessing of the Lord was upon them. God provided for them and cared for them in supernatural ways. They were given manna from heaven, and water from the rock. They were blessed in all that they did (v.7).

At times we may pass through wilderness experiences, in our walk with God. The journey may seem long; the Promised Land may seem to be a long way off. But even in those times, we can expect the blessing of the Lord. He has promised to provide for us; and we can believe for the promised blessing of the Spirit, even during those wilderness times. What God has placed within us is far more important than the circumstances around us. You can walk in the peace that passes all understanding, and know the matchless treasure of Christ in your heart. And there may be a king (or a fellow traveler) that God wants you to talk to.

CHAPTER 13

Blessing And Increase

The blessing of the Lord brings growth and increase. It is the blessing of the Lord that multiplies our resources, so that needs can be met. By ourselves we can do nothing; but with the Lord's guidance and blessing there will be enough for every need to be met. When the 5,000 were fed, it was the blessing of the Lord that multiplied the loaves and the fish. Jesus took the bread and the fish, and "He looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided He among them all. And they did all eat, and were filled." (Mk.6:41,41 KJV). Through the blessing of the Lord, the meager food that the disciples had was multiplied so that the needs of all the people could be met. They gave Jesus what they had; Jesus took it and blessed it, and multiplied it.

What we have will always seem insufficient; but through the blessing of the Lord, our gifts will be multiplied and anointed to minister to people. We must give what we have to Jesus; He will take it, break it, bless it, and give it to people to meet their needs. The blessing of the Lord takes us far beyond what our own resources or abilities could ever produce. It is the blessing of the Lord that we must rely on and believe for, as we seek to minister to people around us.

The blessing of the Lord can be given to us supernaturally, to meet particular needs of God's people. The Lord can bring His blessing upon a situation, and transform it by His power. We can believe for the blessing of the Lord to meet needs, whatever the situation we are in.

Another dimension of the blessing of the Lord is that our own strength cannot produce it. When the disciples toiled all night to

catch fish, they caught nothing. Their own strength and ability could not produce the blessing of the Lord. However, when they followed the Lord's directions, and cast their net out again, it was filled to overflowing. The blessing of the Lord came upon them, after their own strength had failed to produce results. The increase came as a result of God's blessing, and not because of their own strength. We must believe for the blessing of the Lord, and rely upon His promise. The blessing of the Lord will surely come, as we follow God's direction and walk in His Word. The blessing may come in different ways than we were expecting, but it will surely come.

Although there are dimensions of the blessing of the Lord that we experience every day, it is also true that the blessing of the Lord accumulates and grows over a period of time. God can take something that has a small beginning, and through His blessing it will increase over a period of time, until it becomes powerful and great. A small acorn will grow into a great oak tree over a period of time, as water and sunshine nourish the tree and enable it to grow. In like manner, the blessing of the Lord accumulates over a period of time, until it has a powerful impact and bears much fruit. God's people must remain faithful, so that the blessing of the Lord can increase over time. Then God will be able to accomplish His full purpose.

In Abraham's life, we see that the blessing accumulated over a period of time. Isaiah 51:2 says, "Look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth. When I called him he was but one, and I blessed him and made him many." (NIV) Abraham was alone when God called him. He had his own walk with the Lord. He obeyed God's call. And over a long period of time, God blessed him and made him many. God's blessing grew and accumulated throughout Abraham's lifetime, and beyond.

It took a long time for the blessing of the Lord to grow in Abraham's life. There was a gradual growth of blessing, over a

period of many years. In fact, God had promised a blessing to Abraham that was so great, that it would take hundreds of years to fulfill! Much of it was fulfilled long after Abraham had gone to his reward. He never saw his descendants become as numerous as the stars of the sky. But he believed God's promise, that it would happen. For hundreds of years, that promise of blessing has been growing as more and more people become "children of Abraham," through faith in Christ (Gal.3:7).

God promised Abraham a great and wonderful blessing, that would take hundreds and hundreds of years to fulfill. To us, God promises the unspeakable blessing of eternal life, through faith in Christ. How long will it take for that promise to be fulfilled? God will be fulfilling that promise of blessing, for all of eternity! For God has commanded the blessing, even life forevermore (Psalm 133:3).

Although the complete fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham has extended over such a long period of time, the blessing of the Lord was upon Abraham every day as he walked with his God. The blessing of the Lord grew in his life, and in many ways Abraham was blessed. His life was not easy, but the richness of God's grace was upon him.

In fact, after Abraham had grown old, he could look back upon a life that was full of the blessing of the Lord. Genesis 24:1 says, "Now Abraham was old, advanced in age; and the Lord had blessed Abraham in every way." (NASB). The Lord had blessed Abraham in EVERY way; Abraham experienced the blessing of the Lord in every dimension of his life. He had experienced the blessing of health. He had experienced the blessing of God's forgiveness. He had experienced the blessing of righteousness, for it is written, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." (Rom.4:3 NASB) Abraham had experienced the blessing of a godly home; he was blessed with a godly wife, Sarah. He lived to see his children serving the Lord. He had

experienced God's supernatural provisions; he knew what it meant to have God's blessing upon his work and his labors.

Abraham experienced the power of God's blessing. The blessing of the Lord came upon Abraham by God's grace, and mercy. The increase came as Abraham walked with God, and obeyed God's purposes. Over a period of time the blessing grew in power and strength, as Abraham walked with God and followed His ways. The blessing of the Lord was protected, as Abraham walked in God's path. Disobedience and sin would have allowed Satan to destroy God's blessings, but Abraham remained faithful. He refused to follow sinful ways.

A faithful walk with God allows God to bring the increase of blessing in our lives. That is why it says, "A faithful man will abound with blessings." (Prov.28:20 NASB). A faithful man keeps believing God, trusting God, and serving God. A faithful man will not pursue sinful ways. God can bring the increase of blessing upon a faithful person, because Satan is unable to strip it away. One who is faithful becomes a growing channel of the blessing of the Lord.

CHAPTER 14

The Blessing Of The Lord Upon The Next Generation

One of the most powerful aspects of the blessing of the Lord is how it is passed to the next generation. God has given definite promises and principles concerning the blessing of the Lord, and how it can pass down to our children. As we teach and guide our children in the ways of the Lord, the blessing of the Lord can

become a powerful reality in their lives. We must prepare our children to walk in the blessing of the Lord.

Abraham saw the blessing of the Lord passed to the next generation, in his son Isaac. This didn't happen by accident; first of all, it was promised by God, and Abraham believed it. The promise of blessing was to Abraham and his offspring. Abraham believed God's promise, and trusted Him for the blessing.

Secondly, Abraham taught his children in the ways of the Lord. God said something very interesting about this, in Genesis 18:17-19: "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? For I have chosen him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice; in order that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him" (NASB).

God promised the blessing; Abraham was to teach and train his children in the ways of the Lord. As the children learned to walk in God's ways, the Lord could bring the promise of blessing upon the next generation. The blessing of the Lord would grow, and have a powerful impact. This reminds us of the crucial importance of training the next generation in the ways of the Lord. The world has been influencing people to value their careers, status in society, and materialism, at the expense of their children. God, on the other hand, places a very high priority on children. Their upbringing is of crucial importance.

The home is to be a place of nurturing, teaching, and training for the children. God's love and God's presence must be felt in the home. Through prayer, teaching and example, parents can have a powerful impact. The blessing of the Lord is to be experienced in the home; we must teach our children God's ways so that the blessing of the Lord can flow through their lives. Several aspects

of the blessing of the Lord are important to mention, in relation to the family and the home:

The Blessing of Peace

As parents walk in the blessing of peace, it cannot help but have a powerful impact on the children. A peace-filled home comes as a result of the peace of God filling the hearts of mothers and fathers. The peace of God provides security and strength in the home.

A Christian woman was at her home in California, when an earthquake occurred. She gathered her children together in as safe a place as possible, and rather than reacting in fear, she began to praise and thank the Lord, and to pray. This brought peace to the hearts of the children. Psychologists reported that one of the most difficult things experienced by many children during this earthquake, was the fear they saw on the faces of their parents. But in this Christ-centered home, the children saw peace.

The peace of God in a home is a precious blessing, that will have a powerful impact upon the children. As parents learn to walk in the blessing of peace, the children will be drawn to the peace of God. The blessing will be passed on to the next generation. The parents are to teach the children in the ways of God, which lead to peace. Praying with the children is also vitally important, to help lead them into God's peace. As we make our requests known to God, the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Phil.4:6,7).

The Blessing of Forgiveness

The blessing of forgiveness is to have a special impact in the home. As children learn about forgiveness of sins, the Lord can minister this blessing to them. They can experience the blessing of forgiveness through Christ. Confession of sins, and the

assurance of forgiveness can have a powerful impact.

Also, children are to learn the importance of forgiving others, in the home. As the parents model what it means to forgive one another, the children see love being demonstrated. Learning to confess wrongdoings, and asking forgiveness, brings restoration of relationships. Children can experience the blessing of forgiveness, and the mending of relationships in the home.

Blessing Others With Our Words

Children are greatly influenced by what they hear their parents say. When parents make a practice of saying positive things about other people, this has a positive influence on the children. When parents speak words of blessing, even about people who are difficult to love, children will learn to love the unlovely.

On the other hand, when parents indulge in gossip, and speak negatively about other people, the children will learn to do the same. Children who hear their parents indulging in faultfinding and gossip about people in the church will become critical of the church, and of Christianity. Parents are to speak words of blessing over their children. By encouraging them and saying positive words to help them, you minister God's blessing to them. Words are powerful, and words that are spoken to the children to bless them will have a powerful impact. Words of encouragement, words of acceptance, and words of love will minister God's blessing into their lives.

Praying for the children, and praying God's blessing over them every day will also help them to come into God's blessing. Praying and seeking God's blessing upon your children will have a powerful effect. Praying with the children can help them to experience God's blessing, as they pray and begin to develop a relationship of trust with their heavenly Father.

The Fruit of the Spirit

The fruit of the Spirit are to find powerful and constant expression in the home. As the fruit of the Spirit are manifested in the home, children will absorb the reality of God's love. The blessing of the Lord will have a powerful impact, as children experience the fruit of the Spirit. Love is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). As children experience genuine love they will be drawn to the love of God. It is a loving family that will give a child a strong foundation for the future. An atmosphere of love will result in the blessing of the Lord being passed to the next generation. Love must be manifested faithfully, in the home.

Kindness is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:22). Kindness that is expressed in the home will minister God's blessing to husbands and wives, as well as to the children. Kind words and actions will demonstrate the reality of what we believe. In our choices we must allow kindness, the fruit of the Spirit, to be expressed through us. We must ask whether or not kindness is the attitude that encircles our family life. With God's help, it can be.

Gentleness, a fruit of the Spirit, can minister God's blessing in family relationships. A gentle word can turn away anger. Gentleness can greatly improve the atmosphere for communication between husbands and wives. Gentleness in daily living will help to ease tensions in the home, in a thousand ways.

Each of the fruit of the Spirit will minister God's blessing in the home. Without the fruit of the Spirit in the home, children will seldom follow the faith professed by their parents. The fruit of the Spirit demonstrates the reality of God's love in our lives. Children can see that reality. Our choices are what allow the fruit of the Spirit to be expressed in our lives. We can choose to love; we can choose to allow kindness and gentleness to be expressed through our lives. God will help us, as we choose to allow the fruit of the Spirit to be expressed through us in our families. This will help

insure that the blessing of the Lord is passed to the next generation. Nothing can replace the importance of the fruit of the Spirit, if we desire to see the blessing of the Lord passed on to the next generation.

Receiving Christ

Christ is the focal point and reason for God's blessing. Parents must help children to receive Christ into their lives, as Lord. It is not enough to know about Him; they must receive Him into their hearts and lives personally. Confessing Christ as Lord means surrendering our lives to Him; children must see the reality of a life that is surrendered to Christ. Receiving Christ is the beginning of a relationship with Christ, and we can help our children to grow in their relationship with Christ through our prayers and our instruction. Faith in Christ leads to every dimension of God's blessing. Leading our children to faith in Christ is the way we can lead them into the power of God's blessing.

Holiness

Holiness safeguards the blessing of the Lord; a lack of holiness will bring trouble and difficulty upon family life. We can see this ever so clearly, when we consider the idols of our land, and what following idols has done to the family. The idol of lust is towering over our society; following this idol has brought trouble and pain to thousands of families. The idol of lust produces the bitter fruit of strife, conflict and divorce. Those who follow the idol of lust will find bitter fruit, that damages or destroys the home. To safeguard the blessing of the Lord in our families, we must keep our lives completely free from the idol of lust.

The idol of money has also caused trouble in many families. When money becomes the first priority, relationships are neglected. The drive for money and material things has left many

people with an empty family life, or an unfulfilled marriage. God's ways are neglected, and carnal ways take over, when people follow the idol of money. This will always adversely affect the family.

The idol of self is another idol that brings trouble and pain into family life. Self-will leads to conflict and marital difficulty. Self is the underlying cause of many, many divisions in the home. If we do not know the importance of self-denial and humility, then we must learn it for the sake of our families.

The idols of drugs and alcohol have brought heartache to many families. The pain suffered by family members can produce deep scars, and sorrow in the home. Other idols have hurt the home as well-the idol of cults, the idol of humanism, and other idols; all bring trouble to the home, as the bitter fruit of idols comes to pass, in family life. Every idol must be forsaken, if we truly desire to protect our families.

God desires to bless marriages, and family life. He desires what is good for the family, and for children. His commandments and His ways, as they are followed in family life, will result in healthy relationships and the blessing of the Lord upon the next generation.

The Promise of Blessing

God promised the blessing to Abraham and his descendants. We also have the promise of blessing upon our descendants after us: "For I will pour out water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants." (Isaiah 44:3 NASB). Peter also, speaking of the blessing of the Holy Spirit, said, "For the promise is for you and your children...." (Acts 2:39). God promises the blessing of the Holy Spirit upon our children. In fact, the promise

of blessing is powerful enough not only for our children, but for the entire upcoming generation; God has promised that the blessing would impact all the nations of the earth. And the blessing of the Holy Spirit is being poured out on all flesh (Acts 2:16,17). God desires to pour out His blessing upon the young people and children of the upcoming generation in a powerful way.

It is true that young people still have a choice: it is still possible for a young person to choose to resist or walk away from God's plan. But even then, the prayers and loving example of the parents can have a great impact. Indeed, many prodigals have returned to their heavenly Father, after wasting their inheritance on foolish things (Luke 15:11-32). No parent should fall captive to discouragement when a child is not walking in God's ways. Instead, continue to pray, and reflect the love of Christ. The blessing of the Lord is able to have a powerful impact.

God promises the blessing, and the promise of blessing on the next generation is indeed powerful. That is why Satan is attacking the next generation so strongly. Children and young people today are being subjected to unprecedented attacks. Children are being sexually abused, and physically abused.

Drugs, alcohol, and sexually transmitted diseases are taking a powerful toll. And abortion is being used, to destroy the next generation. This is not the first time Satan has attacked the children of the upcoming generation. During the childhood of Moses, Satan launched an attack upon the children, because God was going to raise up a deliverer for Israel. The Pharaoh ordered the youngest children of the Israelites to be put to death. Satan was trying to crush God's plan of blessing. Also, during the time of Christ's infancy, Herod ordered a slaughter of children under two years old. He was trying to put Christ to death; Satan was trying to crush God's plan of redemption, by attacking the children.

In this generation, I believe God is going to send a powerful revival and restoration upon young people - and Satan has been using abortion, sexual abuse, and other evils to try to hinder this next great move of God. But God is still going to send that powerful revival. He said He was going to pour out His Spirit on all flesh. God is calling us to pray, and believe. Revival will come!

Blessing on the Next Generation

The Scriptures tell us that the sins of parents are passed down to the third and fourth generations (Deut.5:9). That is because of the influence of parents as they raise their children. Children are damaged by sin, and learn sinful ways from their parents. The sinful tendencies of parents are imitated and learned by their children. This cycle of inter-generational sin is broken when someone turns from sin, and receives Christ. God's Word says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17 KJV). In Christ we are new creations, and the sins of the past are covered by His blood. The healing, transforming work of the Holy Spirit progressively frees us from the influences of sin. Christ blocks the passing of sin from generation to generation. Instead, in Christ the blessing can be passed from generation to generation, as children are taught in the Word and the ways of the Lord.

The blessing of the Lord can be passed on to the next generation. We must realize that the blessing of the Lord is more powerful than the curse of sin. The damaging cycle of inter-generational sin has been defeated by the blood of Christ, for the child of God. Instead of the influence of sin, we can pass on the blessing of the Lord to our children! We are called to pass on the blessing of God to the next generation. God wants us to have confidence in the

power of His blessing, as we walk in His ways.

It is important to remember what Jesus did when children were brought to Him: "And they were bringing children to Him so that He might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, "Permit the children to come to me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it at all." And He took them in His arms and began blessing them, laying His hands upon them." (Mark 10:13-16 NASB).

Jesus blessed the children. The blessing of the Lord upon the children is significant. We are to bring our children to Jesus, that He would place His hands of blessing upon their lives. We are to bring our children to Jesus in prayer, asking for the blessing of the Lord to be upon them. In dedicating our children to the Lord, this is what we are asking: that the hand of Christ would rest upon our children's lives, so that His blessing would flow down upon them. We can believe, for all the promises of blessing for our children.

As we walk in God's ways, and teach God's ways to our children, the blessing of the Lord will come upon us. As we learn to walk in the blessing of the Lord, the Holy Spirit will work through us to pass the blessing on to the next generation.

We must lay hold of God's promises of blessing for our children, and for the next generation. God has promised His blessing; we must set our hearts upon fully following the Lord, and we must refuse to touch the idols of the land, so that the blessing of the Lord can be poured out upon our children. Only a life of genuine surrender to the Lord can become a channel of blessing that will impact the next generation.

We must lay hold of God's promises in prayer, praying the prayer of faith for God's blessing upon our children. Lifting our children

before the Lord in prayer, praying daily for their needs and their lives, will bring in the blessing. The blessing of the Spirit will move in their lives, in answer to prayer. In fact there may be challenges and battles which can only be won in prayer.

As we walk in God's ways and seek to pass on His blessing, God's promise will have a great impact: "Then their offspring will be known among the nations, and their descendants in the midst of the peoples. All who see them will recognize them because they are the offspring whom the Lord has blessed." (Isaiah 61:9, NASB).

CHAPTER 15

Reversing The Curse: Overcoming Negativism

"Bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you."
(Luke 6:28 ESV).

"Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them."
(Romans 12:14 ESV)

Negativism, criticism and complaining seem to pervade the atmosphere of our society. No one is immune from the stinging barbs of criticism. Even though you may be trying to do what is right and good, people may come against you with harshness, critical statements, or anger. The negative and angry words which come from man's fallen nature are actually a form of cursing.

First Peter 3:8-9 specifically tells us how we can respond to these negative things, and reverse them, in order to obtain the blessing of the Lord: "Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing" (NIV).

By blessing those who insult or curse us, we reverse the negative effects that that person would otherwise have on us. This really works! Pray a prayer of blessing over those who have criticized or attacked you. Pray sincerely, that God will bless them in a powerful and healing way. The blessing is more powerful than the curse. By blessing those who curse us, we remove the power of the negative thing that was spoken. The curse of verbal criticism is rendered powerless.

If only God's people would realize the power they have, in blessing those who curse them! The power of the blessing is indeed mighty, and is supernatural. The power of the blessing will change lives, change relationships, and change the whole atmosphere we live in. In blessing those who insult or curse us, we not only minister the blessing to them, but we inherit a blessing upon ourselves as well (I Peter 3:9). It is a blessing that will enrich our souls, making us more loving and compassionate, and helping us to become a greater channel of the blessing to others.

When we pray for God's blessing on people who have wronged us, it means that we must genuinely forgive them. It is as we forgive people that we will desire God's blessing for them. When we pray for God's blessing on those who have wronged us, this will help empower us to truly forgive them. Praying for God's blessing releases the power of God's forgiving love in our lives. By forgiving and blessing, you are lifted above the negative influence of an angry or critical person. Forgiving and blessing

that person means you are reflecting the character of God, who is loving towards all. Jesus knew the power of loving your enemies, and blessing those who curse you. He said, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you" (Lu.6:27,28 NASB).

Jesus said we are to bless those who curse us. We are to minister God's blessing to them. He also said that we are to pray for those who mistreat us. We are to pray that God's blessings would come upon their lives - that they would be saved, filled with the Holy Spirit, and blessed in every area of their lives. Be as Jacob, and wrestle in prayer for them, until the power of God's blessing breaks through and transforms their very life. Pray for the blessing of God's healing and love. Pray for the blessing of repentance, that will empower them to turn from sin. Pray for the blessing of forgiveness to transform them, and that they would receive life through Jesus Christ. Pray for God's grace and mercy upon their lives. God will answer our prayers, in powerful ways. The power of the blessing will be released, through prayer.

When we have confidence in the power of God's blessing, it enables us to respond in love, even to those who come against us with negative or critical words. We can love and bless them, knowing that the power of God's blessing will both protect us, and minister to them. The blessing of the Lord will touch them in a positive and healing way.

The Royal Priesthood

The people of God are called a royal priesthood, in 1st Peter 2:9. It is a beautiful thing, to be a part of the priesthood of believers. The royal priesthood has a high calling, and a royal ministry. We can learn about the royal priesthood, by looking first to the Old Testament priests. In the Old Testament, the priests were to offer up sacrifices, and to intercede for the people. Another important duty they had was to bless, in the name of the Lord. They were to

minister the Lord's blessing. Aaron and his sons were instructed to bless God's people: "Thus you shall bless the sons of Israel. You shall say to them: The Lord bless you, and keep you; The Lord make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace." Then God said, "So they shall invoke my name on the sons of Israel, and I then will bless them" (Num.6:23-27 NASB). The Levites were also instructed, to bless in the name of the Lord (Deut.21:5). Thus the ministry of blessing others was a vital ministry of the Old Testament priests.

In the New Testament, all believers are a part of the royal priesthood (I Peter 2:9). As a royal priesthood, we are to pronounce blessing in the name of the Lord. There is power in speaking words of blessing to people around us; we must learn to speak words of blessing, words that come from a heart of love.

In the Body of Christ today, it is crucially important that believers bless one another in the name of the Lord. We must genuinely long for each of God's people to be blessed. This is a powerful concept, that the Body of Christ must lay hold of in order to walk in the blessing of the Lord. The priesthood of believers has the power to minister in the blessing of the Lord. We must desire and pray for each person in the Body of Christ to be blessed, with the full measure of the blessing of the Lord. If someone rubs you the wrong way or disagrees with you, pray for the blessing of the Lord to flood their life. Pray until the blessing comes! This will keep the blessing of God flowing, upon you, the other individual, and the church.

Sadly, far too often the blessing of the Lord has been blocked and stifled by conflicts in the church. We must learn to bless, in the name of the Lord. James describes the power of the tongue, either for blessing or for cursing: "With it (the tongue) we bless our Lord and Father; and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing

and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. (James 3:9,10 NASB).

How do people curse one another? By speaking against fellow believers in a critical spirit, it is the same as cursing them. Even more common is the practice of gossip; gossip is when you talk about the fault or sin of someone who is not present. The gossiping that pervades our society and infects the Body of Christ is actually a form of cursing - and it blocks the blessing of the Lord much more than we have ever realized, in the Body of Christ. God's people must learn to bless - to say something good about another person, or to say nothing. If you have a conflict with another person, go and work it out privately with that individual. If you are still unable to resolve it, follow the steps given by Jesus, in Matthew 18:15-17. This would eliminate gossip and slander completely, if it were only followed by all of God's people.

Gossiping and slander can be compared to "friendly fire," a term adopted by the military. "Friendly fire" is when soldiers in battle shoot or bomb their own people, by mistake. Gossip in the Body of Christ is a form of "friendly fire," and it is tragic when God's people wound and hurt one another in this way. Nothing reduces or hinders the effectiveness of God's army, like "friendly fire."

To avoid gossip, we must have a good understanding of what gossip is. Gossip involves speaking of the fault of an absent person. 95 percent of the time it is completely unnecessary to speak of the fault of an absent person. If God's people would make it a habit, to avoid speaking of the fault of an absent person, gossip would cease. Lord, help us to set a guard over the door of our lips! Help us to avoid speaking of people's faults behind their backs! Give us an understanding heart, and love and compassion for all of your people. Then our words will be edifying, and will minister grace to those who hear (Eph.4:29)

Blessing our brothers and sisters in Christ must come from the heart. We must not be like some of David's enemies, who blessed with their mouth, while inwardly they cursed (Psalm 62:4).

Blessing must be genuine, flowing from the heart. At times in the Body of Christ, people bless someone with their mouth, while in their heart is still enmity, jealousy, or bitterness. God sees the heart, and He sees when believers harbor ill feelings against one another. Blessing must be genuine. Our heart's desire must be to see everyone in God's family blessed, without exception.

We must ask forgiveness, and ask God to cleanse our hearts, when we have harbored any ill feelings or resentments towards a fellow believer. Begin to genuinely bless your brother or sister, and allow the love of God to flow from your heart toward them.

Healing will begin to flow! The royal priesthood, God's people, must bless one another in the name of the Lord. The blessing of the Lord must flow from heart to heart, as God's people desire and pray for the blessing to be poured out on every member of the Body of Christ. Let all gossip, judgmental words, and backbiting cease from the Body of Christ! Then the blessing of the Lord will be poured out in such a way that it will truly bring healing to the church, and to our land.

CHAPTER 16

The Blessing Of The Lord On Our Finances

God desires to manifest His blessing on our finances. The Lord has promised that if we seek first the kingdom of God, He would meet our needs for basic necessities as well (Matt.6:25-33). Not only does God want to take care of our basic needs; His purpose is that we become channels of His blessing to others, to touch a needy world. We will look at three major areas of finance, each

with a promise of blessing attached to it.

Before we do, I need to emphasize that God's blessing in the area of our finances is not so that we can set our hearts on material things, become self indulgent, or become independently wealthy. God's blessing has a vastly different purpose: to glorify Christ and to help those in need. We are not to "give in order to get," or set our hearts on the accumulation of material things. Instead, God's promises of blessing are intended to encourage us to give generously, and become greater instruments of blessing to others. This will glorify Christ. We must never "use" Christ in order to obtain His blessings. We must do the opposite: use every blessing, to glorify Christ! This is only possible if we avoid the self-indulgent, materialistic attitude that is so prevalent in our world today. The materialistic attitude is selfish; the giving attitude inspired by the Spirit says "Lord, I want to see your blessing poured out upon others, through me."

Tithing

Tithing, the giving of one-tenth of our income to the Lord, has a specific promise of blessing attached to it: "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the Lord of Hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it may not destroy the fruit of the ground; nor will the vine in the field cast its grapes," says the Lord of Hosts. "And all nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land," says the Lord of Hosts (Malachi 3:10-12 NASB).

God promised to pour out an overflowing blessing, on those who bring their tithe into His storehouse. He will rebuke the devourer for you, so that Satan will be unable to devour your provisions. It is a powerful promise of blessing, from God's Word. When we

tithe, the power of God's blessing will come upon our lives. Some have said that tithing is a part of the "Law" and therefore is not required for Christians. However, it is important to remember that tithing began hundreds of years before the Law was written, when Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek (Gen.14:18-20).

Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek, the priest of God Most High, and Melchizedek is spoken of as a symbol of Christ in the New Testament (Heb.7:1-3). So Abraham was giving tithes as unto Christ, when he gave ten percent to Melchizedek. Abraham is the father of faith, yet he tithed. The blessing of the Lord is still upon those who tithe. It is a unique and powerful blessing. God has promised to pour out His blessing upon those who tithe, until it overflows. Tithing is to be a step of faith, and God will surely honor it, according to His Word. The prophetic promise of blessing in Malachi 3:10-12 should be seen not as a legalistic requirement, but as a prophetic promise which enables us to extend the work of God in a greater fashion.

Giving to the Poor

Another dimension of giving which has a specific promise of blessing attached to it, is giving to the poor. Psalm 41:1-3 says, "Blessed is the one who considers the poor! In the day of trouble the LORD delivers him; the LORD protects him and keeps him alive; he is called blessed in the land; you do not give him up to the will of his enemies. The LORD sustains him on his sickbed; in his illness you restore him to full health" (ESV).

Also, Proverbs 22:9 affirms that, "A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor" (NIV). Ministering to the poor results in blessing. The Lord will deliver you in a day of trouble (Ps.41:1). The Lord will protect you, and restore you to health (Ps.41:3). The Lord will bless you upon the earth (Ps. 41:2).

Not responding to the needs of the poor will hinder God's blessing: "He who shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will himself cry out and not be heard" (Prov.21 :13 KJV). We are living in an urgent day, when God is calling for Christians to share their material blessings with the poor. The United States and other Western countries have been abundantly blessed with material provisions, while much of the world struggles with extreme poverty, starvation and malnourishment. God calls His people to reach out and minister in a spirit of compassion.

There are excellent Christian ministries, which channel food, medicine, clothing and other help to the poor in various countries. They must be supported with the consistent, monthly giving of God's people. We are responsible to find reputable ministries to support with our giving. Then the blessing of the Lord will flow through us, to touch people in need with the love of Christ. There are ministries which minister to the poor around the world, as well as in our own nation. As we give unto the poor, the blessing of the Lord will be upon our land.

Missions and Evangelism

Psalm 67, sometimes called a missionary psalm, is a prayer imploring God to bless His people: "God be merciful to us and bless us, And cause His face to shine upon us, That Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations" (Psalm 67:1,2 NKJV). Why is the blessing asked for from God? That "Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations." The purpose of the blessing is to make His salvation known among all the nations of the earth. This is the purpose of missions and evangelism: to make His way known upon the earth. We can rightly ask for God's blessing when we are seeking to make His salvation known to the ends of the earth.

We are not blessed to keep God's blessings to ourselves, or to live a life of luxury and ease. By supporting missionary and evangelistic ministries, we are bringing the blessing of the gospel to the ends of the earth. As we support missionaries and evangelistic ministries, the blessing of the Lord will flow through these ministries, to make God's salvation known throughout all the nations. God has promised to pour His Spirit out on all flesh (Acts 2:16-18). The outpouring of the Spirit is the outpouring of blessing, leading people to salvation through Christ, forgiveness, and every other aspect of the blessing of the Lord. As people find Christ and learn the ways of the Lord, the blessing of the Lord is flowing forth, impacting all of the nations of the earth. Much of this takes place through missionary and evangelistic ministries, which are taking the word of the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Every child of God is to be supporting evangelistic and missionary ministries so that the blessing of the gospel may reach the world in our generation. All of us are called to be witnesses for Christ. Our missions work involves both telling others about Christ, and supporting and sending missionaries out with the gospel. If we are not going out as missionaries ourselves, we are to be supporting and sending them with our prayers and finances.

The Hindrance of Debt

Our society encourages people to buy on credit, and go into debt. But going into debt can hinder and restrict the Lord's blessing. The borrower is a slave to the lender (Prov.22:7), and the interest you pay on borrowed money ends up robbing you of needed provisions. Interest causes you to pay much more for most items than they are really worth. Our society encourages people to buy now, and pay later. Whatever appeals to the flesh and is delightful to the eye - you can buy it now and pay for it later. But the blessing of the Lord will grow and be strengthened in our lives when we avoid going into debt, wherever possible. Then we can be greater channels of blessing for the purposes of God.

Seek First the Kingdom

The promise of provision that Jesus gave was based on seeking first the kingdom of God. He said, "Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?' For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt.6:31-33 NASB). Jesus gave us a definite, unfailing promise, concerning our physical needs. The promise will not fail, to those who meet the conditions. The promise of provision is given to those who make the kingdom of God their highest priority.

This involves, first of all, seeking the King, and allowing Him to rule in our hearts. Christ Himself must have first place in our lives. He must rule and reign in our hearts, a rule of love, purity, and grace. The kingdom of God is extended wherever the King is given His rightful place.

The kingdom of God must have first place in our giving, our prayers, our witness, and our inner lives. The rule of the kingdom is based on love: "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength," and "you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:30,31 NASB).

As we seek first the kingdom, the Lord has promised to meet our needs. We can rely completely upon this promise of provision (of course we also need to keep in mind that God gives us the ability and responsibility to work for our daily bread, and provides for us through our own labors as well - 2 Thess.3:6-12).

If the life of the kingdom and our relationship with Christ are in first place, our physical needs will be met as well. Where our

treasures are, there our heart will be also. We must be sure that our treasures are truly in heaven. We cannot set our hearts on material things and wealth; we must continually set our hearts upon the kingdom of God.

There is much more than can be said about finances, from the Word of God. Here we are only touching on this area in relation to God's blessing.

CHAPTER 17

The Spirit And The Church

There are seven important dimensions of the Spirit in the life of the church. If the church is to be the channel of blessing that God intended it to be, these seven dimensions of the Spirit must be nurtured and allowed to grow and develop. Each of these seven dimensions were present in the early church; thus the Word of God gives testimony to each of them. Each of these seven dimensions also represent streams of renewal, that God has been restoring to the church since the time of the Reformation. The blessing of the Lord is to rest upon the church; the Holy Spirit desires to manifest His blessing in these seven areas. Although each of these areas have seen extremes or misuse, they are all vital to the life of the church, if the church is to be the instrument of blessing that God intended it to be.

(1) EVANGELISM

The Holy Spirit comes upon God's people for the purpose of witnessing and evangelism: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 2:8 NASB).

In evangelistic ministry, there must be a clear message of surrender, if people are to be won to Christ. When Jesus called people, He called them to forsake their old life. Jesus saw Levi sitting at the tax office, and said, "Follow me!" And Levi left everything behind, and rose up, and began to follow Him (Luke 5:27,28). His past was left behind, as Levi followed Christ into a new life. In a similar way, we must call people to a clear, definite turning; a turning away from their old life, as well as a commitment to follow Christ in faith.

The Holy Spirit empowers us, to bring the message of salvation through Christ to the ends of the earth. The Holy Spirit anoints His Word, to bring people to Christ; the blessing of forgiveness and salvation are given when someone believes in Jesus Christ, and surrenders to Him as Lord. The blessing of the Lord comes into people's lives, through the ministry of evangelism.

*** The early church practiced evangelism (See Acts 8:27-38/Acts 16:6-10/Matt.28: 18-20/Acts 11:19-26/2 Cor. 5:18-20).

(2) HOLINESS

Another dimension of the Holy Spirit working in the church is holiness. The Holy Spirit purifies and cleanses God's people, to be holy. The Holy Spirit empowers us, to walk in victory over sin. The blessing of the Spirit is given to turn us from our sinful ways. Without a turning from sin, and a turning from sinful ways, the blessing of the Lord cannot be given. If the church cannot lead people to turn from sin, she has failed her mission. It is only as people turn from sin in genuine repentance, that the blessing of the Lord can be restored to our land. The Holy Spirit works through the church, especially in the ministry of the Word, to turn people from sin. The blessing of the Lord can be restored in people's lives, when they turn from sin and turn to Christ in faith.

It is not only turning from sin, but walking with Christ in faith that brings the blessing of the Lord. Holiness must not be neglected or compromised, because holiness safeguards the blessing of the Lord. Without holiness, the blessing of the Lord will be stripped away from God's people. If the church is to be a powerful channel of blessing in this world, she must have holiness, to safeguard the blessing.

***The early church emphasized holiness (See Acts 2:37-41, I Cor.6:9-11, Acts 24:24-5, Heb. 12:14, Acts 17:30-31).

(3) RELATIONSHIPS

Jesus in His ministry emphasized relationships. He called together the Twelve, to be with Him (Mk. 13:14). He taught them to love one another, and to wash one another's feet. He taught them to serve one another, rather than seeking for a position of greatness. In many ways, Jesus emphasized the importance of relationships. This continued in the early church. The believers were of one accord before the day of Pentecost came (Acts 1:14). They were of one heart and soul (Acts 4:32). There was a powerful unity and love that was present in the early church.

The Holy Spirit brings us into unity, in the church. We are told to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace (Eph.4:3). It is crucial that the church be knit together in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can only be poured out, where God's people are united in love. The blessing of the Lord will come only upon a united, believing people. So the blessing of the Lord is clearly tied to relationships. A church that is united in the Holy Spirit will experience the power of the blessing, and will become a great channel of the blessing of the Lord.

When we consider past years, and realize how many churches have been robbed of the blessing of the Lord because of disunity

and strife, it becomes more and more obvious that we desperately need unity. So much has been lost, through disunity and strife. We must seek the restoration and strengthening of relationships, throughout the Body of Christ. Rather than pointing fingers at others, each of us must humble ourselves and ask forgiveness for where we have failed. We must make amends, and seek for reconciliation and unity wherever possible, in a spirit of love.

*** The early church had unity of relationships (See Acts 1:13,14, Acts 4:32, Acts 2:42, Eph.4:2-6).

(4) PENTECOSTAL/CHARISMATIC DIMENSION (Worship and the Gifts)

Worship

A beautiful aspect of the charismatic movement that has brought new life to the church has been a restoration of worship. Singing praise and worshipping in the Spirit are an outflow of the Spirit-filled life: "..be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord." (Eph.5:18,19 NASB).

Worship is also a dimension that leads to the blessing of the Lord: "Let all the people praise Thee, O God; let all the people praise Thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him." (Ps.67:5-7 KJV).

Gifts of the Spirit

Both in the life of Jesus and in the early church, we see gifts of the Spirit being given to minister to people's needs, and to bring God's blessing into their lives. The gifts of the Spirit are an avenue that God still uses today, to bring His blessing into

people's lives. For example, God can bring the blessing of physical health into a person's life, through a gift of healing (I Cor.12:9). James gave instruction to the church, concerning prayer for healing. He said, "Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed." (James 5: 14-16a NIV).

Other gifts of the Spirit also minister God's blessing to people. The gift of faith, the working of miracles, the word of knowledge, the word of wisdom, and each of the other gifts are to meet people's needs and bring the blessing of the Lord into their lives in various ways. (I Cor.12:7-11). The gifts are an important dimension of the blessing of the Spirit.

*** The early church experienced worship, and the gifts of the Spirit (See Col.3:16, Eph.5:18-20, Acts 8:5-8, Acts 3:1-8, Acts 5:1-5, I Cor.12:7-11).

(5) PRAYER AND THE INNER LIFE

The church is to be focused on prayer. God said, "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations." (Isaiah 56:7 NIV). It is not only in our individual lives, but in the church that we must make prayer a vital priority. A united, praying people will see the blessing of the Lord poured out. The Holy Spirit will work through a praying people, to meet needs and bring the blessing of the Lord. The blessing of revival and restoration will come as God's people unite in prayer. Concerted, united prayer will move the hand of God to work mightily in our land. United efforts in prayer should go beyond church boundaries, as people from various churches join together in praying for our land. Revival and restoration can begin with just a few people. If just a handful

begin to pray, the spark can light a fire that will spread. The church must come into agreement in prayer, praying in agreement and praying in faith for the blessing of the Lord to be poured out. The more God's people pray, the more the blessing will flow, The blessing of the Lord will bring revival and renewal. The early church was a praying church.

*** (See Acts 1:13,14 Acts 4:23-31, Eph.6.18,19, Acts 13:1,2, Acts 2:42).

The Inner Life

The church must focus not only on prayer, but on the inner life of believers. Christ dwells within every one of God's people (2 Cor.13:5), and Christ living and ruling within us is our strength. Paul said, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal.2:20 NASB). The church must focus on the indwelling Christ, and our communion with Him. We can have rich communion with Christ, who dwells and abides within us. The unsearchable riches of Christ include the inner riches of His indwelling presence.

*** The early church focused on the inner life (See Eph.3:16,17, Gal.2:20, 2 Cor. 13:5,6, I John 4:4,15).

(6) WORKS OF COMPASSION

The people of God are to be known by their ministry to the hungry, the strangers, the sick and the prisoners (Matt.25:35,36). The church is to be motivated by the fruit of the Spirit, which is love. Love will compel us to minister to hurting and needy people with works of compassion. The church can be a channel of blessing through ministry to the poor, the sick, and the lonely. The Holy Spirit longs to work through the church to minister to hurting people with concrete acts of giving and love. It is not only

our words, but our deeds that will convince people of the reality of the gospel. Works of compassion to help hurting people must be a crucial priority for the church; God will use us to raise people into the victory and freedom of Christ.

In countries that have more prosperity and abundance, the church has a great responsibility to give material resources and assistance to the poor and starving in other countries. In the early church the Gentile believers in Antioch gave of their resources to help those in Judea who were experiencing poverty and drought (Acts 11:27-30). We must love our neighbor as ourselves by ministering to the hungry and the poor, no matter what country they may be in. The church can be a powerful instrument of blessing, through works of compassion.

*** The early church ministered in works of compassion (See Acts 6:1-3, Acts 4:34-5, Acts 9:36,39, Gal.2:7-10, Heb. 13:2,3).

(7) DEVELOPMENT OF MINISTRIES

The Holy Spirit works in the church, to raise up and develop new people in ministries. As people are called by God and equipped for ministry they become channels of God's blessing through their ministries. In an ongoing way, the Holy Spirit continues to develop new ministries in the church. Each of God's people can serve in various areas of ministry. Ministries of teaching, preaching, giving, serving, administration, visiting, evangelism and many others are needed; each person in a unique way can be a channel of the blessing of the Lord. God has given gifts to every person, that need to be developed and used. God has places of ministry for each of us. We can be channels of blessing, both to God's people and to the world around us. Blessing comes as people serve in places of ministry, as directed by the Lord.

Of course not all ministries take place within the church. Many

ministries are to be focused on the community, and the world around us. Ministries of evangelism, feeding the poor, visiting and caring for the sick, visiting prisoners, and many others are designed to minister God's blessing to the world around us.

*** The early church encouraged the development of new ministries (See Acts 6:1-6, Acts 13:1-4, 2 Tim.2:2, I Cor.12:12-31).

These seven dimensions are all vital to the church. Whatever the specific vision each local church may have, these seven dimensions will remain vitally important. The Word of God bears abundant testimony to each of the seven areas we have focused on. The blessing of the Lord will be poured out, as the church seeks to minister in these seven areas. The church is to be a great channel of blessing; that means that each believer must become a greater channel of blessing as well, growing in the seven areas we have mentioned.

* I am indebted to Rev. Peter Lord for his insight into five of these areas, in the message, "*Living in These Last Days*," (1990 James Robison Bible Conference). See an in-depth treatment of five of these areas in *Streams of Living Water: Essential Practices from the Six Great Traditions of Christian Faith*, by Richard Foster (1998, Harper Collins).

** The seven areas above can also be studied as: (1) Seven dimensions of the life of Christ (2) Seven dimensions of love (3) Seven dimensions that glorify Christ.

CHAPTER 18

More Areas Of Blessing

God wants to bring His blessing to people everywhere. His will is for people to walk in the transforming power of His blessing and to be a blessing to others. But often people hinder His blessing, or refuse to walk in His ways. There have been many works of beauty which God has wanted to pour out, which have been blocked or hindered by disobedient people. What if the whole world were filled with loving, humble, praying people. Could you imagine the good things that God would be able to bring to pass?

There may be areas of blessing that God wants to pour out, that are hindered or restricted for a period of time by the choices of selfish believers or ungodly people. Even godly leaders who desire to lead the church in God's purposes may be hindered by ungodly or disobedient people. Yet God will continue to bless and provide, as we walk in His ways. Our hearts must be set on following the Lord and walking in His ways so that the promise of blessing can be poured out. Much patience and love are needed to lead people in God's plan of blessing.

There are corporate dimensions of the blessing that may be hindered by disobedient or negative people. But that cannot stop God's plan of blessing for those who walk in His ways. God will continue to pour His blessing upon our lives, as we seek to be instruments of blessing to help others. We must walk in humility, making sure that we do not hinder others from receiving God's blessing. May we never be people who selfishly hinder others from receiving the blessing of God. It is of utmost importance that we seek to be instruments of blessing to those around us, walking in obedience to the Lord.

Unity or Carnal Ways?

When God uses individuals as great channels of His blessing, it is

possible to become preoccupied with the channel, and lose sight of the source of blessing. This is what was happening in the church at Corinth. God was using Paul, Apollos and Peter in powerful ways. But believers began to form into groups, and say, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Peter" (I Cor.1:12). They became preoccupied with personalities, and were blind to the source of the blessing. As a result they became divided; they did not see that God was the source of the blessing.

Today in the body of Christ we must cease our preoccupation with personalities; we must not exalt a particular leader or group as if it were the source of the blessing. Competition, strife, and idolizing personalities has been a great hindrance to the blessing of the Lord, in the Body of Christ. The blessing of the Lord has been sidetracked so many times because of strife, because of idolizing personalities, and because of conflicts between groups of believers. Paul identified the source of the conflicts and divisions at Corinth. He told them, "For you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men?" (I Cor.3:3-4 NASB).

The flesh or carnal nature of believers is what influences them to idolize personalities, and to become entangled in conflicts with one another. We must turn from carnal ways, and cease our involvement in divisions and strife. We must see the Body of Christ as a whole, and strengthen our commitment to the whole Body of Christ. We must surrender our petty differences, and recommit ourselves to unity and to the overall good of the Body of Christ. It is the whole Body of Christ that we must uphold in love.

God is the only source of blessing. Rather than becoming preoccupied with the instruments God uses, we must turn our attention to the source of blessing. As we see God as the only

source of blessing, it will strengthen our unity in the Body of Christ. Paul reminded the Corinthians of this great truth. He said, "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow" (I Cor.3:6,7 NIV). Paul and Apollos were channels of blessing, greatly used of God. But only God was the source of the blessing.

We can thank God for every instrument that He uses, to bring His blessing into this world. And if God is particularly blessing one of His children, thank God for it! If God is pouring out His blessing on a particular church, thank God for it! Jealousy and competition have no place in the Body of Christ. Rather than being envious or competing, we should thank God for how His blessing is being poured out on various people.

The blessing of the Lord will grow as we seek to strengthen the unity in the Body of Christ, and as we each seek to become greater channels of blessing to touch people in need. This world needs to be touched by every channel of blessing possible; there is to be no place for competition and strife among believers. As we rightly understand the blessing of the Lord, it will help us to strengthen the unity of the Body of Christ. And it will cause us to appreciate and thank God for every person and every church He uses to spread His blessing in this world.

Wisdom

God's wisdom is a treasured gift that will lead us in the path of blessing for our lives. As we seek the wisdom of the Lord, He will lead us in His ways. Proverbs speaks of the blessing that comes upon those who find the wisdom of the Lord: "Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches

and honor. Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who embrace her; those who lay hold of her will be blessed." (Prov.3:13-18 NIV).

The blessing of the Lord will flow through our lives, as we walk in the wisdom of the Lord. He is the source of wisdom; walking in the wisdom of the Lord means walking in humility, and in submission to His will. The blessing of wisdom is more profitable than gold or rubies. It is a precious treasure, that God desires to give us. God's promise to us is, "Seek, and you shall find."

The Blessing of Doing the Word

There is a blessing that is attached to doing what the Word of God says. It is not only knowing the Word; it is doing the Word that God has promised to bless. We can deceive ourselves, and think that because we know something it is therefore a reality in our lives. But it is the doing of the Word that will allow us to be instruments of God's blessing.

After Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, and told them of the importance of serving one another, He said, "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." (John 13:17 NIV). The blessing of the Lord will flow through us as we serve others, in a spirit of love. James also speaks of the blessing that comes from being a doer of the Word, rather than a forgetful hearer (James 1:25). It is in doing what God's Word says, that the blessing of the Lord can flow through our lives to touch other people

Persecution and the Blessing

The blessing is more powerful than the curse; this is especially true when God's children encounter persecution for the sake of Christ. The evil that is in the world cannot rob you of the blessing of the Lord, as long as you continue to walk in God's ways.

Persecution will only increase the power of the blessing upon the church.

The early church was persecuted, attacked and harassed, yet the blessing of the Lord continued to grow. More and more people were won to Christ; the more evil that was done to God's people, the more the power of the blessing was poured out on the earth. For every believer that was martyred, four believers arose to take their place. The blessing grew, transforming lives and changing thousands upon thousands of people.

The Apostle Peter wrote to believers who were experiencing persecution during that time: "Even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence" (I Peter 3:14-15 NASB). He continues, "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you" (I Peter 4:14 NASB).

The blessing of the Lord cannot be stopped by persecution or harassment, as long as we continue to walk in God's ways. If we experience some suffering for the sake of Christ, it will only increase the blessing of the Lord. The blessing will be increased in our hearts and lives; and the power of the blessing will be poured out in a greater dimension, in the world.

CHAPTER 19

Eternal Blessings

"Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'
(Matt.25:34 NASB).

The most incredible of all blessings is the gift of eternal life. To live eternally with Christ, in a place where sin, pain and death have been removed, is a blessing so great that we simply cannot comprehend it. In the immediate presence of God, there will be no more sorrow, no more suffering, and no more death:

"And He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away" (Rev.21:3,4 NASB). In God's immediate presence there will only be perfect love. No fear, or sin, or suffering will exist there to trouble God's people. Perfect love will have removed all fear from the hearts of God's people. Perfect love will have completely forgiven all of the sins of God's people. And perfect love will have healed God's people of all of their sufferings. In the presence of God's perfect love there will be endless satisfaction, and peace. At His right hand there are pleasures, forevermore (Psalm 16:11). The perfect love of God is infinite, and unending, and greater than we can comprehend.

This world cannot receive the fullest measure of God's blessing, because the curse of sin is deeply rooted in mankind. Only after sin, death and evil have been dealt with will the full extent of the blessing be experienced by God's people. This will take place in the age to come: "And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His bond-servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face... And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them" (Rev.22:3-5 NASB).

The fulfillment of the blessing of the Lord will be in eternity, where nothing will be able to hinder or stop it. We must look to the eternal fulfillment of the blessing of the Lord, and not become overly attached to the things of this life. The things of this life are temporary at best, while the blessing of the Lord goes on into eternal fulfillment,

The blessing of the Lord is far greater than we can comprehend, and will take an eternity to be experienced. The blessing of the Lord will bring into existence a new heaven and a new earth, where the peace of God will reign. That will be our wonderful inheritance. The precious treasure of Christ, dwelling within us, will result in eternal blessing. It is the inner treasure of Christ, and the inner richness of God's love within us that we will carry with us into the next life.

Most of the early Christians did not have monetary wealth, or high positions or popularity. Yet they had a treasure that money could not buy. They had the treasure of Christ, dwelling within them. They had the treasure of peace, and joy in the Lord. Many of them became martyrs during the great persecutions. They laid down their lives for Christ. But they carried the rich treasures of Christ with them, into the life to come. They were incredibly wealthy, though they had no earthly riches. They had an inner wealth of love, and grace. And they carried it into the next life. The inner richness of Christ, dwelling within us, is what makes us ready for eternity. If Christ is dwelling within us, and we have the assurance of His indwelling presence, we will take that treasure into the next life. "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (I John 5:12 NIV).

If you are not sure whether Christ is dwelling in you or not, you need to surrender your heart and life fully to Christ. Ask Him to come in, and cleanse you of all your sins. Turn away from those sins, with all your heart. Trust Christ fully, that He gave His life

for you upon the cross. Ask Him, the risen Lord, to reign in your heart and life from now on. A life that is yielded to Christ will experience the blessing of Christ's love and forgiveness, and the assurance of eternal life. "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life" (I John 5:13 NASB). The assurance comes, through faith.

Eternal Blessings

Because this world is infected with sin and death, this world cannot be the ultimate resting place for God's blessing. The blessing of the Lord will last forever, for the people of God. So the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan of blessing will take place in the next life. Much of what we experience in this life can lead to blessing in the life to come. Since the blessing of the Lord cannot be stopped by our death, we must look to the eternal fulfillment of God's plan of blessing. Even the trials and difficulties that we go through are only going to increase the depth of God's blessing upon our lives, in eternity: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal" (2 Cor.4:17,18 NKJV).

Things may happen in our lives that we do not understand: we may experience losses that are unexplainable, in this life. But eternity will reveal His purpose, and the losses that we have experienced in the Christian life will produce an eternal weight of glory far beyond our sorrows. The depth of the blessing we experience in eternity will be that much greater, because of the difficulties and sorrows we have experienced.

Eternal Rewards

The things that are done for Christ, without thought of present rewards, will increase the blessing of the Lord that is given in the life to come. Jesus said, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner; do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and repayment come to you. But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous" (Lu.14:12-14 NASB).

We must focus on the everlasting dimensions of the blessing; the power of the blessing will come into fullness, in eternity. Things that we do in this life out of love for Christ will result in fullness of blessing in eternity. God's blessing in the age to come will not be based on the power, wealth, or prestige that people have in this life. The rewards in the age to come are based on the motives of the heart. One who gives even a cup of water to someone for the sake of Christ will not lose his reward.

Culmination

Today we see a worldwide battle, between the blessing and the curse. The battle will continue, and increase in intensity, until the time of Christ's return. The culmination of the blessing of the Lord is going to be revealed at the final judgment, when Christ will say to His own, "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt.25:34 NASB).

The curse is also moving to a place of culmination, when the day of judgment is accomplished, and Christ will say to those on His left, "Depart from me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt.25:41 NASB).

In our time God is still patient, desiring all to come to repentance. As we walk in His blessing, more people can be reached. The Lord is able to bring forth His blessing, even in the midst of a corrupt world. The blessing of the Lord can bring repentance, and turn people towards Christ. We must believe, for the blessing to be manifested powerfully in our world.

CHAPTER 20

The Path Of Blessing In The Psalms

In the Psalms we find a path of blessing, as God's Word reveals many dimensions of the blessing of the Lord:

Blessed Trust

Psalm 84:12 speaks of the blessing which rests upon those who trust in the Lord: "O Lord Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in you" (NIV). We can experience the blessing of the Lord, as we trust Him. To trust in God's Word, and trust His love toward us, will lead to the blessing. We must trust the Lord, even when we cannot see how He is going to manifest His blessing.

Jeremiah 17:7-8 also speaks of the blessing that rests upon those who trust in the Lord: "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord and whose trust is in the Lord. For he will be like a tree planted by the water, that extends its roots by a stream and will not fear when the heat comes; but its leaves will be green, and it will not be anxious in a year of drought nor cease to yield fruit" (Jer.17:7,8 NASB). The blessing of the Lord is a hidden resource, that we can tap into by trusting the Lord. The blessing of the Lord will enable us to bear fruit and stay green, even in a year of drought.

Blessed Praise

Psalm 67:5-7 reveals the blessing that comes upon those who praise and worship the Lord: "Let the people praise Thee, O God; let all the people praise Thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him" (KJV).

Praise and worship lead to blessing; in every situation we can praise and thank the Lord, knowing that He is causing all things to work together for our good. The blessing of the Spirit is given to those who worship.

The Blessed Savior

Psalm 72:17 points to the blessed Savior, in whom alone we are blessed: "His name shall endure for ever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed" (KJV). We are blessed in Christ, with every spiritual blessing. This was foretold in the Psalms, hundreds of years before Christ. Psalm 21:6 also tells us that the blessing of Christ is an everlasting blessing: "For Thou hast made Him most blessed forever" (KJV).

Blessedly Saved

Psalm 32:1,2 speaks of the blessing of forgiveness, which is given in salvation: "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit!" (NASB). Forgiveness is given, when we put our faith in a crucified and risen Savior. It is an unspeakable blessing to receive complete forgiveness for all of our past sins. This blessing is given to us through Christ.

Blessedly Strengthened

Psalm 84:5-7 speaks of the blessing of being strengthened by the Lord: "How blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee; in whose heart are the highways to Zion! Passing through the valley of weeping, they make it a spring, the early rain also covers it with blessing. They go from strength to strength, every one of them appears before God in Zion" (NASB). The will of God is to strengthen us in His ways. His will is to strengthen us, enabling us to walk victoriously in this world. "They go from strength to strength;" God desires to lift us, from one level of strength to another. The strength of God will be given, until His people all appear before Him in Zion.

Blessed Fear

Psalm 112:1 speaks of the blessing that is given to those who fear the Lord: "Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who finds great delight in His commands. His children will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed" (NIV). The fear of the Lord leads to blessing. It is when we are in awe of the Lord that we stay within His commandments; we are afraid to displease or grieve the Lord. His commandments help to keep us in the path of blessing for our lives. The blessing that comes from walking in the fear or respect of the Lord will impact the next generation. The children of those who fear the Lord will be mighty in the land. "The generation of the upright will be blessed!"

Blessed Discipline

Psalm 93:12 reveals that even the disciplining work of the Lord leads to blessing: "Blessed is the man you discipline, O Lord, the man you teach from your law" (NIV). The discipline and correction of the Lord is for a good purpose in our lives. It leads to blessing. Self-discipline is far better than external punishment. When we correct ourselves and take heed to what God's Word

says to us, the Word is able to teach us without having to experience severe correction from the Lord. The Lord would rather have us learn to discipline and correct ourselves, than to be corrected by painful mistakes or other types of correction. The man who is teachable and receives instruction from God's Word is receiving the Lord's discipline, through His Word. May we be open to God's Word, and truly take it to heart, so that the Lord can work clearly and definitely in our lives. His Word will guide us and mold us, to be instruments of blessing in this world.

Blessed Provisions

Psalm 41:1-3 speaks of the blessings that come upon those who remember to help the poor: "Blessed is the one who considers the poor! In the day of trouble the LORD delivers him; the LORD protects him and keeps him alive; he is called blessed in the land; you do not give him up to the will of his enemies. The LORD sustains him on his sickbed; in his illness you restore him to full health" (ESV). God's blessing will rest on those who give, to meet the needs of the poor.

A Blessed Nation

"Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance" (Psalm 33:12 NASB). The nation whose God is the Lord will experience the blessing of the Lord. But what of the nation that worships idols? The nation that worships the idols of money, sex, pleasure, drugs, alcohol, and self will not experience the blessing of the Lord. They will experience the curse, and the judgment of God. People must turn from idols, for God's blessing to be restored.

God's people are called a holy nation (I Peter 2:9). They are a nation within a nation, a holy nation within a nation corrupted by idols. But even among God's people, the influence of idols has

greatly hindered God's blessing. The idols must be torn down and forsaken, for the power of God's blessing to be restored.

Family Blessing

Psalm 128:1,2 speaks of God's blessing upon families: "How blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways. When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, you will be happy and it will be well with you. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine, within your house, your children like olive plants around your table. Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord" (NASB). Those who walk in God's ways will experience the blessing of the Lord upon their families. Some who have been unable to have children have turned this adversity around by adopting children, leading to blessings in these children's lives that they otherwise would not have experienced. The blessing of the Lord will strengthen, protect, and build our families, as we walk in the strength and fear of the Lord. We must pray for the blessing of the Lord to be restored to families, all across our nation.

In the Psalms we also find the Lord as a blessed refuge (Ps.34:8), and we find the blessing that brings increase (Ps.107:37,8). We find the blessing of peace (Ps.29:1 I), and an inheritance that is blessed (Ps.37:22). We find blessing from our Creator (Ps. 115:14,15), and the blessing of eternal life (Ps.133:3).

These and other dimensions of the blessing of the Lord are spoken of in the Psalms (some of which have been mentioned in earlier chapters), revealing the path of blessing which we can assuredly walk in. As we walk in the path of the Lord's blessing, God will be glorified. We can pray the prayer of Psalm 67:1-2, for the glory of God: "God be merciful unto us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us; that Thy ways may be known upon the earth, Thy saving help among all nations" (KJV).

Conclusion

Toward The Full Measure

May we hunger and thirst, to walk in the full measure of the blessing of the Lord! The blessing of the Lord is something we experience every day; but the full measure is something that relatively few people have walked in with consistency. The door is opened wide, and God is calling us to walk in the full measure of the blessing of Christ. It is indeed precious, to have God bless whatever we put our hands to. God is looking for believing, yielded vessels, who can be instruments of His blessing in this world. May we press forward, unto the full measure!

In the fullness of the Lord's blessing, God's love and grace flow through us abundantly. In the fullness of the blessing, we become growing channels of blessing to people around us. In the fullness of the blessing, prayer is flowing through us like a river: God brings life wherever it flows! In the fullness of the blessing, material resources are also flowing through us, to touch people in need. In the fullness of the blessing, we have healthy, growing relationships with other people in the family of God. In the fullness of the blessing, God's forgiveness cleanses us, and flows through us to those who have wronged us. There are no grudges, there is no unforgiveness. In the fullness of the blessing, we are able to love all.

In the fullness of the blessing, people are turned to Christ through our life and witness. In the fullness of the blessing, the Spirit carries us beyond the hindrances of our sinful nature. In the fullness of the blessing, the fruit of the Spirit is flowing through our lives, in full measure. In the fullness of the blessing, our trials and difficulties do not hinder the blessing of the Lord. Our troubles and difficulties are covered with blessing. In the fullness

of the blessing, we have a deep assurance about the Lord's will, that His will is to love us, bless us, and strengthen us in His ways. We have that assurance as a strength and as a stabilizing reality within our hearts. In all of this we always need to remember that God's blessing is not the highest priority: it is Christ Himself, ruling and reigning at the right hand of the Father, who is far above every blessing. We are to set our hearts upon Him (Col.3:1,2).

Most of us walk in the full measure of the blessing only part of the time. But even when we are not walking in the "full measure," the blessing of the Lord is still upon us! (If we have yielded to sin at any point, God's blessing is still upon us, to lead us to repentance. But we must respond to His conviction, or forfeit His blessing). God is leading us forward, and helping us to walk in more and more of His blessing. His purpose is that we become growing channels of the blessing, to impact our world for Christ.

The blessing of the Lord is also meant for our families. It is not in the spectacular things, but in the daily walk with Christ that the blessing of the Lord can flow through us to impact our families. The blessing of the Lord can grow to have a powerful impact on our children, and the upcoming generation.

Sin and carnal ways have hindered the blessing, in many ways. Growing in the blessing of the Lord means honestly confessing and forsaking our sins. It also means confessing the realities of our sinful nature. The Lord must shine His light upon us in this realm, because it is a definite hindrance to the Lord's blessing. Confession and turning from selfish ways allows the power of the blessing to come upon us anew. The blessing of the Lord in all of it's dimensions is meant for every believer. But only a surrendered walk with Christ will lead to the fullness of blessing. Carrying the cross is essential, to walk in the full measure of the blessing. Jesus always walked in the full measure of the blessing, yet He endured the cross, in order to be a channel of blessing to

this world.

Prayer brings in the blessing. God is calling His people to pray, all across the Body of Christ. The life of prayer is a life of blessing, and only a growing army of praying people can bring the power of the blessing back to our land. Do you hear His call to prayer? Are you determined to pray, until the blessing comes? God's promise of restoration still applies today:

"If my people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." (2 Chron. 7:14 KJV).

God will pour out His blessing in marvelous ways, upon a praying, believing, surrendered people. The power of the blessing will be poured out in sovereign and lasting ways. God will bring healing to our land.

"And I will cause showers to come down in their season; they will be showers of blessing" (Ezekiel 34:26 NASB).

See <http://www.compassionheart.com/> for additional articles and information on the Christian life.

SCRIPTURE GUIDE

* Study the passages below as well as their context, for greater understanding of Scriptural truths concerning the blessing of the Lord.

Ascension Blessing - Lu.24:50,5 1

Blessing & Trials – James 1:12

Blessed Channels - Psalm 67:1,2

Eternal Blessing - Matt.25:34

Blessed in Christ - Eph.1:3

Sabbath Blessing - Gen.2:3

Blessing of Children - Mk. 10:3-6

Blessing & Confidence - Rom. 15:29

Blessing of Creation - Gen. 1:22

Blessing & the Cross - Gal.3:13-14

Blessing & Discipline - Ps.94: 12

Blessing & Faith - Gal.3:9

Blessing on Families - Ps.128:1-3

Blessing & Forgiveness - Rom.4:7,8

Blessings of Health - Deut.7: 14-5

Blessing & Holiness - Ps.24:3-6

Blessing & Idols - Deut.11:26-8

Blessing & Increase - Is.51:2

Blessed Inheritance - Ps.37:22

Blessings Lost - Heb. 12:6

Blessing on a Nation - Ps.33:12

Blessing & Opposition - Deut.28:7

Blessing on Israel - Deut.28:1-14, Num.24: 1

Blessing Overtaking Us - Deut.28:2

Blessing of Peace - Ps.29:11

Blessed Praise - Ps. 67:5-7

Blessing & Prayer - Gen.32:26-9, 1 Ch.4: 10

Blessing by Priests - Num.6:22-27

Blessing on All Believers - Eph. 1:3/Gal .3:9/Rom.4:7,8,

Blessing Restored - 2 Chr.7:14

Blessing & Strength - Ps.84:5 Gal.3:13,14, etc...

Additional Areas of Blessing:

Blessing in the Beatitudes - Matt.5:1 - 12

Blessed by the Creator - Psalm 115:14,15

Blessing Those Who Curse Us - I Pt.3:8,9/Lu.6:27,28

Blessing on the Dwelling of the Righteous - Prov.3:33

Blessing & Finances - Mal .3:10-1 2/Ps.42: 1 ,2/ Ps.67: 1,2

Blessing & Food for the Poor - Deut.24:19/Deut.14:28-9/Prov.22:9

Blessing on the Next Generation - Is.61:9/Gen.18:17-9/Acts

2:16,17

Blessing & Joy - Deut.16:15

Blessing & Obedience - Deut.28:1-14

Blessing & Persecution - I Pt.3: 14/15/4: 14/Lu.6:27,8

Blessing upon Relationships - Gen.32:26-9/ 33:1-4

Blessing & Repentance - Acts 3:26/Acts 2:38

Blessing of Service - John 13:12-17

Blessing of the Spirit - Gal.3: 14/Gal.5:22,3/Acts 2:1-39/

Blessing of the Gifts of the Spirit - I Cor.12:7-11

Blessing on the Lord's Supper - Matt.26:26

Blessing & Surrender - Gen.22:16-18

Blessing & the Temple - Haggai 2:18,19

Blessing & Trust - Ps.84:12/ Jer. 17:7,8

Blessed in the Wilderness - Deut.2:7

Blessing & Wisdom - Prov.8:32-5/Prov.3:13-18

Cursing of Blessings - Mal.2: 1,2

More Blessed to Give than Receive - Acts 20:35

Patience & the Blessing - Heb.6:13-15

Priestly Blessing & the Glory of the Lord - Lev.9:22-24

Seven Blessings in Revelation: Rev. 1:3 / 14:13 / 16:15 / 19:7-9 /
20:6 / 22:7 / 22:14

Showers of Blessing - Ezek.34:26

Blessing on Individuals:

Abraham - Gen.12:1-3 / 22:16-18

Adam & Eve - Gen. 1:28-29

David - I Chr. 17:25-27

Isaac - Gen.26:3-5, 12

Jabez - I Chr.4: 10

Jacob - Gen.32:24-29

Jesus Christ – Eph. 1:3, Gen.22:16-18, Gal.3:12-14, Luke 3:21-
22, John 1:32-34, Ps. 72:17.....

Job - Job 1:9,10 / 42:12,13

Noah - Gen.9:1

Sarah - Gen. 17:16

Mary - Lu. 1:42-45,48

Paul - Rom. 15:29

Peter - Matt.16: 13-19
