

Blessed is the man; what man?

Everybody wants to be happy, and blessedness is promised to the believer. However, there are caveats; we do not seek happiness for itself, or for our pleasure, but blessedness is the outcome of seeking and obeying God.

The goal of modern living is hedonism and selfishness, but it should never be so for the Christian; furthermore, we are not promised complete happiness in this life, despite the claims of Charismatics. Indeed, we are repeatedly promised tribulation, suffering, rejection and persecution – just as Christ was. The blessed Lord was able to say, ‘Now is my soul troubled’ (Jn 12:27) and his greatest apostle could say, ‘we despaired even of life’ (2 Cor 1:8). Indeed, the psalmist David cried ‘My soul also is greatly troubled’ (Ps 6:3) and the great prophet Jeremiah could say, ‘I am in distress; my soul is troubled’ (Lam 1:20). We are in good company in our problems. Constant joy, prosperity, health and happiness are fool’s gold.

The state of blessedness is part of the hope for the future when Christ restores all things. In this world at this time we have enemies and the strife with these ensures that happiness is not constant but fleeting. Our warfare with the world, the flesh and the devil means that life is not a bed of roses. Indeed, it is deliberately so because the troubles of this life are used by God to train us for his heavenly kingdom. We grow through our trials.

However, it must be emphasised, nevertheless, that the Christian life is one of blessedness since this is God’s promise. While the consummation of this is in the future, there are many applications of this today. But it is crucial that we understand the root of this blessedness or we will never experience it. Is it in the constant application of faith, as claimed by Charismatics, or is it something else? Now faith is always important in the Christian life without a doubt, but the faith evidenced by Charismatics is not what the Bible describes as true faith. Their faith is mere positive assertion based upon false principles, but Biblical faith is always based upon Christ. It has nothing to do with ‘name it and claim it’ or with visualisation and other occult ideas; faith is based upon right thinking and right action in connection with God’s word. Thus the scriptures explaining the blessedness of men have much to do with doing the right things, as we will now demonstrate.

The phrase, ‘blessed is the man’ appears thirteen times in the NKJV, and we will group these together to look at what they teach. First, the list:

Blessed *is* the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight *is* in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. Ps 1:1-2

Blessed *is* the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit *there is* no deceit. Ps 32:2

Oh, taste and see that the LORD *is* good; blessed *is* the man *who* trusts in Him. Ps 34:8

Blessed *is the man* you choose, and cause to approach *you*, *that* he may dwell in your courts. Ps 65:4

Blessed *is* the man whose strength *is* in you, whose heart *is* set on pilgrimage. Ps 84:5

O LORD of hosts, blessed *is* the man who trusts in you! Ps 84:12

Blessed *is* the man whom you instruct, O LORD, and teach out of your law. Ps 94:12

Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who delights greatly in His commandments. Ps 112:1

Blessed is the man who listens to me [Christ as Wisdom], watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoever finds me finds life, and obtains favour from the LORD. Prov 8:34-35

Thus says the LORD: 'Keep justice, and do righteousness, for my salvation *is* about to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. Blessed *is* the man *who* does this, and the son of man *who* lays hold on it; who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and keeps his hand from doing any evil.' Isa 56:1-2

Blessed *is* the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD. Jer 17:7

Blessed *is the* man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin. Rm 4:8 [quoting Ps 32.]

Blessed *is* the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Jm 1:12

The first thing to say is that the Romans text is merely a quote from Ps 32, which means that there are twelve separate occasions when this phrase is used in this exact form. This is interesting since twelve is the number of divine government or the covenant with man. These statements about blessing form the constitution of God's covenant with man, they are part of the covenant blessing that belongs to Christ and is shared with those in his body; they are a key constituent of the Gospel. God brings blessing to men through his covenant, through Christ, and these features will be manifest in those who know the covenant. Let us examine them.

Now while this may be a trifle arbitrary, it is curious that these exhortations about blessing sub-divide into eight sections, since eight is the number of resurrection. This is fitting since we are discussing the effects of God's covenant in man, which is totally based upon life in Christ, resurrection life, the new man. All the benefits of the Christian life emanate from being a new creation, a man with resurrection life. Even late in his ministry Paul's overriding goal was to know more about the power of the resurrection of Christ in his daily life (Phil 3:10-12).

1. Blessedness follows righteous behaviour as a result of knowing and obeying God's law.

Blessed *is* the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight *is* in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. Ps 1:1-2

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Overwhelmingly, Scripture tells us that blessedness follows righteousness. If we want to be blessed we must walk in righteousness.

True blessings are only in Christ

Firstly, this means that there is no blessedness for anyone who is not justified by faith in Christ. The only righteousness of value to God is the righteousness of his own Son, and this righteousness is only imputed to those who have faith in Christ, who are called according to his purpose. There is no blessedness, no heavenly goodness, given to those with no faith, to those who do not know Christ.

Now this calls into question many claims made by evangelicals of all sorts.

1. Those who teach a 'Common Grace' are wrong. This theory (which only developed about 110 years ago) claims that unregenerate men can please God and receive of his grace, his goodness and favour. Now this theory is utterly unbiblical, not merely because it is never even mentioned in Scripture but, because it goes against Biblical doctrine and clear Biblical statements. God tells us that he hates the wicked and that there is no peace for them. Grace only comes from the cross and is directed to those who are elect and no one else. No wicked man, no unrighteous man, no one outside Christ can be blessed by God, as these Scriptures teach us.
2. It is a gross error to claim that Christians should follow occult and pagan practices in order to be blessed because they work. Thus Paul (David) Yonggi Cho, John Wimber (and many other Charismatics and Word Faith teachers) teach that Buddhists and practitioners of other Eastern religions are more open to the supernatural and are able to visualise desires, claim them and believe in them so that they are received. They teach that we should copy these pagan methods, such as intense visualisation, specific detailed prayer requests, intense meditation and expectancy. Apart from the fact that believers must never copy pagan methods or beliefs, God tells us in the Scriptures that real blessedness only follows those who obey God's law and walk righteously. There is no blessing in following pagan ideas. Indeed, here we specifically learn that it is disobedience to God to take counsel from pagans, '**Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful**'.
3. It is wrong to take any counsel from pagan sacred writings; they have nothing to teach us. Everything we require is set forth in God's word and we need nothing else (2 Tim 3:16). Those who endorse the scriptures of other religions and encourage believers to read them (and there are many who do this in these days) are grievously offending God; indeed it is hard to believe that they could be genuine Christians.

God's law

Secondly, true blessing is only for those who honour God's law; who know, love and obey all that God says. We are called to delight in God's law, to meditate in it day and night. How can such an exhortation be reversed into 'we can ignore God's word', substituting for it subjective 'prophetic' impressions? The pressure for modern believers to be antinomian ('against law') is very strong in these days. Everywhere there are teachers telling people that we do not need law at all and neither do we need to study that dry, old, dusty book – the Bible.

Now there are two claims here:

1. *The first is the abandonment of any principle of law in the Christian life.* Now there is great confusion about the principle of law in the New Covenant, too much for us to unravel here (see my book, *The Believer's Relationship to the Law*). Charismatics tend to be antinomian and some Reformed folk tend towards legalism. Both are wrong. The Christian is called to follow the law of Christ, there is never a time when a believer is not under law since the law is merely God's will for human behaviour. He is not under Mosaic Law, but is always under Moral Law. This Moral Law, manifest from Creation, was subsumed in the Mosaic Law and surrounded with all sorts of social, ceremonial and civil precepts, which were temporary. Their purpose was to point us to Christ. When Christ came, he fulfilled all the law and the Moral Law was subsumed in him as the New Covenant; Christ is now the standard for human behaviour. This standard is now worked out in believers through the work of the Spirit in us; as we walk in the Spirit by faith we obey Moral Law, now called 'The Law of Christ' (Gal 6:2). The law is no longer external, but internal and activated by divine power in us through the Spirit in the new man. Christians can keep the law, in Christ; before the cross no one could keep the law. Reformed folk who neglect the Spirit and seek to obey the law by human effort and external observation are legalists who will never be happy and will struggle to

be righteous. Charismatics and Higher Life mystics who deny that there is any law at all neglect proper obedience to God and his word. They will drift into more and more unrighteousness, and this is evidenced in their behaviour.

2. *The second is the denial that the Bible is necessary, authoritative and fundamental in the Christian life.* There is no excuse whatsoever for any believer to shun God's word. When he comes to Christ he does so through the word and then reads this Bible – but these Scriptures show very clearly that continuance in studying it is vital and necessary. A person can only neglect Scripture reading by disobedience. Those leaders who teach people that reliance upon the Bible is wrong will be severely condemned on the Last Day. How anyone can prefer the sappy, empty and unfulfilled prophecies of Charismatic leaders to the beauty of Scripture is beyond me.

Instruction

Now, having dealt with these two issues, we can see the vital importance that God gives to honouring his word. There is no blessing without it. God teaches us out of his law, his word, and we must be instructed in it. This is very important. We are not entertained by God's word, but we must be instructed. We need good teaching in order to sustain ourselves, and mere superficial reading and preaching is insufficient. For this reason our wiser forbears always catechised new believers, training them in sound doctrine from the Bible over a period of many months. Very few churches still perform this vital task. In this way many good catechisms were produced over the centuries which have aided people in instruction and which are well worth studying today. We could mention the Heidelberg Catechism, The Westminster Shorter and Longer Catechisms, Spurgeon's or Keach's Catechisms and many more. There is no excuse not to see these as are they are all freely available on the Internet. We must be instructed in God's will through his word if we are to know blessing. There is no blessing in a person who is not soundly instructed.

Lay hold

But more than knowing God's law through instructions, we are commanded to lay hold of it if we are to know divine blessing. God's word is not something that we merely hold in our brains, but it must become the interpretation of our hearts. God's word must fill our lives and be the basis of all that we do and say. Knowing it intellectually is insufficient; we must instil it in our personality and let it drive our decision making day by day. God's word must be the arbiter for our personality. Our choices must be made as a result of God's word.

That this is necessary is obvious; God's word, God's law, is just the outward expression of God's will for us. If we truly want to serve God and honour him, then we must do what he says. If we want to be like Jesus, then we must act like he did, who only did what his Father told him to do – Jesus obeyed the Father's every word; so must we.

Righteous living

Finally, the outcome of obeying Scripture is walking righteously. Over and over we are commanded by God to do right, to keep justice, to be righteous. Righteousness is something we do, something we keep (guard), and ensures that we do no evil. No one who practises evil will gain any blessing from God. To avoid evil we must study God's law and learn what is right and wrong; this is the purpose of discipleship (Heb 5:14); we learn how to walk right as we learn what is right and what is wrong. Sadly today many modern believers appear to have no clue what is right and wrong behaviour – because they are so ignorant of God's word.

Blessedness comes from knowing God's law, understanding his doctrines by instruction, honouring his precepts and walking righteously by obeying divine instruction. There is no blessedness for people who deny God's word.

2. Blessedness follows sins forgiven.

Blessed *is* the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit *there is* no deceit. Ps 32:2

Blessed *is the* man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin. Rm 4:8 [quoting Ps 32.]

There is no divine blessedness where there is also sin! The foundation of blessing is atonement, sin dealt with and God's justice satisfied. What a great blessing to have sins forgiven.

This means, firstly, that no sinner, no unbeliever, can know any blessing. Thus the apparent blessings, or happy circumstances, of their life are not blessings at all but yet further outworking of the curse of the Fall. Do not be deceived, do not look with human eyes on circumstances. The rich are not blessed; indeed the outcome of their lives, even at a human level, often betrays their curse when they die in loneliness, drunk, drugged, debauched, humiliated, scandalised and so on. It has often been the case that the poor peasant in history has been more content and peaceful than the aristocrat. Sinners are not blessed and their pleasures are snares.

Secondly, there is no blessing in the sinful old nature of the believer. Its end is death, a sentence already pronounced (Rm 6), while it currently increases in corruption (Eph 4:22-24). Thus it is of foremost importance to the saint, that he puts off the old man constantly. The Christian life, in one sense, is merely learning how to put off the old nature all the time and trust in God. The blessing of the believer is in the new man, the life of Christ. The old nature is not converted, not improved, not fixed but condemned to death and must be treated as if it is already dead. It has been sentenced to death and is made unemployed (Rm 6:6, *katergeo*), thus the believer lives by faith that this nature is dead and thus denies himself. This is the doctrine of mortification.

But these psalms also demand that the walk of the blessed man be righteous. Living by faith must be translated into walking in the Spirit and actually doing good deeds. Understanding the doctrine is not enough, there must be application of it ethically. The believer is forgiven of his sin, but must also walk without any deceit. Far too many supposed Christians thank God for their forgiveness and spend all their time in sin, caring nothing for good deeds. They sin all day and then pray for forgiveness at night. This is not the Christian life and such folk will find that they were never truly saved. The true Christian lives a life of constant repentance – he walks with God and not according to the flesh. This is the way of blessedness.

3. Blessedness follows knowing and trusting in God.

Oh, taste and see that the LORD *is* good; blessed *is* the man *who* trusts in Him. Ps 34:8

O LORD of hosts, blessed *is* the man who trusts in you! Ps 84:12

Blessed *is* the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD. Jer 17:7

God is Spirit and he is known only by faith. Faith lays hold of the invisible as if it were in front of his eyes; it is the conviction of things not seen (Heb 11:1). The basis of our relationship with God is trust; the reason the world does not know God is because they do not trust his words.

The beginning of blessedness is trust, faith. This is not merely blind faith or the confused faith as a force of Charismatics, which is a pagan / occult faith; it is faith in God and in his word. God reveals himself through his word and those who trust God believe this word and live with more and more faith.

But true faith leads to more and more life. As the saint studies God's words and believes them, he learns more of God and, as it were, tastes and sees that God is good to him. His hope is stimulated and grows the more he tastes of God through his word and also through prayer, which is simply communicating with God as Father.

Blessedness is first experienced when we trust in God and develops the more we have faith in him.

4. Blessedness follows election.

Blessed is the man you choose, and cause to approach you, that he may dwell in your courts. Ps 65:4

The only people who know God's blessing in this universe are the elect, those chosen by God in eternity. There is no blessing for the reprobate, whom God is repeatedly said to hate and abhor since they are left under the curse of sin (Ps 11:5). Any attempt to forge doctrines (such as 'Common Grace') which teach that God blesses the reprobate are false and dangerous since they deny the very character of God as manifest in Scripture. Still worse are those heresies which claim that Jesus died on the cross for reprobate sinners (e.g. Arminianism and Amyraldism).

The first blessing of being elect is that God causes such to approach him, even with boldness by the blood of Jesus (Heb 10:19-20). The elect are blessed by being able to dwell in God's courts; in other words, they are God's spiritual house (Eph 2:19). No reprobate person can approach God; he cannot even be heard if he prays. But the wicked do not genuinely seek God but are consumed with selfishness and their own interests.

This means that all those Charismatics who pursue blessings upon the wicked are deceived. Many teach, with John Wimber, that the means of bringing people to God is to first bring them healing and power. After seeing signs of power, after being healed, they are supposed to be more amenable to the Gospel. But this is putting the cart before the horse; there is no blessing for the wicked who are far from God and cannot experience his grace in any way. Only the elect before conversion will eventually receive grace and be drawn to Christ, and Jesus tells us that this is the minority; only few are chosen (Matt 20:16).

This also means that all the pagan approaches to God are false deceptions. There is no method of approaching God created by man. The only people who can approach God are the elect. These are drawn to Christ by God in time (Jn 6:44, 65). Note that 'draws' here is the same word as found in John 21:6, i.e. being dragged as a net full of fish is dragged into a ship. The elect are dragged against their own will by God who changes their will to accept the Gospel; if left in their dead state they would never come to Christ. Arminianism is a lie; man has no free will to choose Christ; if God did not drag us kicking and screaming we would never be saved. This also means that all those who embrace pagan methods of approaching God (mystical ascent, passivity, sacramentalism etc.) are disobeying God and embracing the world – which makes them an enemy of God (Jm 4:4).

5. Blessedness follows self-denial, strength in God and being dead to the world.

Blessed is the man whose strength is in you, whose heart is set on pilgrimage. Ps 84:5

The key to a successful Christian walk is living in God's strength and not man's. Each day the believer must put off the old man and put on the new (Eph 4:22-24). Unless this is

actually done, nothing will be of value – and yet so many believers have no clue about this discipline. The second item mentioned in this psalm is that our heart must be set on pilgrimage; we must understand that we are strangers and sojourners in this world and are not part of it in any way.

These two things are vital: we place no trust in ourselves but die to ourselves and we place no hope or aspiration in the world, but are dead to it. Dead to ourselves and dead to the world – two key foundations of faith for the believer (Gal 2:20, 6:14). When Christians obey the command of God to apply these truths then there is blessing. This implies that where Christians do not obey these then there is no blessing. The blessing is upon those who are dead in Christ and alive in Christ. In the cross of Christ believers have died to themselves, died to sin, and they have died to the world. They have been crucified with Christ to the world, the flesh and the devil but are now raised with Christ so that they can abide in him and walk in the Spirit, bearing fruit. God's blessing is upon those who mortify themselves by believing the Gospel promises and applying them day by day.

These truths cut across all human activity and strength, and declare that much that is done in the church today is of no value, since it is done in the flesh. Thus all those works that attempt to change the world for the better, or to influence politics to be more 'Christian', are a sheer waste of time – they are dead works. The world will worsen, as God informed us long ago; our job is to witness to Christ in this dying world and to edify the brethren. All those works done in the flesh with great ceremony, pomp and fleshly activity, are just wood, hay and stubble before God and will bear no fruit. All those works that indulge men or lift them up, all those strategies that elevate a certain leader, all those practices emanating from some authoritarian preacher – they will all be despatched to death since they have no spiritual value.

What God blesses is that which originates in him through Christ. Only what is done in God's strength, with a view to heaven and not the world, is of any spiritual value. Such works will receive a reward and will glorify God on the Last Day.

6. Blessedness follows the fear of God.

Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who delights greatly in His commandments. Ps 112:1

Repeatedly Scripture tells us that the fear of the Lord is crucial in living a blessed Christian life. It is the beginning of wisdom, the beginning of knowledge and it results in obeying God's word. It is to be taught to children since it leads to the knowledge of God. It results in hating evil and doing good. It even prolongs life. Yet many in the church today have no conception of a fear of God and live in a way that treats God with derision.

Overwhelmingly, certain sections of the church manifest a superficial attitude to God, even acting as if the Lord is a buddy or a pal like men. When Charismatics 'blow the Spirit' upon an audience they demonstrate no fear of God. When men use God's name in vain or fail to thank him, there is no fear of God. When men make presumptions in prayer there is no fear of God. When men water down the Gospel and ignore sin there is no fear of God. We could go on.

Fear means what it says; the meaning behind the Hebrew and Greek words is terror, being in awe, reverence. Fear of God means being afraid to disobey him or to give him any offence. Though we can come boldly into God's presence, we walk in this life in fear of grieving him in any way. The fear of God means that we will be careful in what we say, what we do, and even in what we think. It means that we will be sure to obey his commandments and delight in them since they help us to walk in godly fear.

Being a Christian is being a ‘God-fearing man’, something lost today. Without the fear of God we cannot live right since we work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12; here ‘fear’ is *phobos* as in our ‘phobia’). If there is no real fear of God then there is no true discipleship. However, godly fear is not cringing, servile fear, we do not worship God in the manner of pagans, but we serve God with respect and reverence for his awesome and terrible majesty.

Without the fear of God we will be led astray, but as we walk in the fear of God we will be blessed. Indeed, God only fellowships with those who fear him properly and obey his word: ‘on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at my word’ (Isa 66:2).

7. Blessedness follows wisdom.

Blessed is the man who listens to me [Christ personified as Wisdom], watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoever finds me finds life, and obtains favour from the LORD. Prov 8:34-35

The Bible continually affirms that believers must be wise. There is no excuse to be foolish since even the simple can follow the Lord and be led correctly. As we observe God’s word we become wise (Ps 19:7) and we can always ask God for a specific need of wisdom (Jm 1:5).

Time and time again we are exhorted to be wise, to follow wisdom and here we are told that finding wisdom leads to life and God’s favour. This means that any behaviour that is clearly foolish cannot be of the Lord and will lead to death. Far too many supposed believers are behaving with great foolishness these days.

There is a difference between appearing foolish in the eyes of the world and actually being foolish. To the world the faith of Christians is folly, and we are called foolish because we trust in Christ; the Gospel itself is folly to the world (1 Cor 1:18). We are proud to be considered foolish in our preference for the word of God. However, our behaviour should never lack wisdom according to God’s word. Clear foolish behaviour, acting contrary to God’s word, should be condemned.

For instance:

- Falling backwards to the floor to receive spiritual blessing (being ‘slain in the Spirit’).
- Laughing uncontrollably.
- Writhing, jumping, dancing, screaming, and other forms of indecent behaviour.
- Succumbing to passivity.
- Paying money to receive healing.
- All forms of unbiblical sacramentalism.
- Allowing men to have authoritarian power over a church.
- Following unbiblical rituals.
- Submitting to untested, unbiblical, authoritative prophecy.
- Claiming that a fleshly nation is the privileged people of God.

The list is endless. All these can be shown to be contrary to God’s word and are foolishness, and yet they predominate in many modern churches.

There is no blessedness where there is no wisdom, where folly reigns. This does not require a great intellect but careful obedience to God’s word.

8. Blessedness follows patient endurance.

Blessed *is* the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Jm 1:12

Patient endurance is out of fashion in the modern church; all too often believers are focused upon getting instant results with no suffering or patience – instant healing, instant prosperity, instant financial security, instant release from character problems through exorcism – and so on. But James tells us that the man who endures is the man who is blessed.

The Christian life is pictured in God's word as being one of patient endurance; we inherit the kingdom through many tribulations (Acts 14:22). When Paul mentioned this it was part of an exhortation to encourage young disciples in Asia Minor. He did the same in Thessalonika, 'we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation' (1 Thess 3:4). Note this, part of Paul's discipling of immature believers was to warn them that life will be hard and involve much suffering – but God uses these trials to our good (Rm 8:28) and gives us grace to help in time of need (Heb 4:16). Indeed, it is through the way that we endure tribulation that we grow in spirit and become more useful to God and shine with a better testimony -

We also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Rm 5:3

Indeed God only gives eternal life to those whose confession is genuine as proved by their endurance, 'eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honour, and immortality' (Rm 2:7).

Modern day Charismatic promises of abundance in life, prosperity, ease and getting everything we want or aspire to are not only shallow but will damage young disciples. The truth makes us free and the truth is that the Christian faces great opposition and requires constant endurance.

For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise. Heb 10:36

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. Heb 12:1

But fear not, God's power is directed especially towards our need of patient endurance. Note Col 1:10-12,

That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father.

To walk worthy of the Lord, to bear fruit and to please him, we must endure. But God gives us all the strength we require to do this out of his glorious power so that we may be patient with joy and thanksgiving. Note this, God's glorious power is not directed to enable us to raise the dead or perform miracles, but to be longsuffering and bear it with joy and thanksgiving. This is the opposite of the modern Charismatic message. The power of the Christian is to innocently suffer with rejoicing (1 Pt 2:20); this is a good testimony.

At the end, the testimony of the elect is threefold – it is that they obeyed God's word, they kept the faith of Christ and they patiently endured all opposition from the world, the flesh and the devil.

Here is the patience of the saints; here *are* those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Rev 14:12

Such people are the only ones on Earth who are truly blessed. Be encouraged suffering one.

Blessedness is not

Having examined what 'blessed' means and where it originates, we must affirm what blessedness is not and where it does not come from.

Blessedness is not principally material, though God in his grace does bring us healing, prosperity and success more than we deserve in his will; it all depends upon his plan for the individual. Some believers have a life full of suffering and few material blessings, yet God provides them with a rich inheritance. Other believers have a measure of material success, which they are expected to put to good use as God directs. Most of us are somewhere in between. We cannot judge spiritual value by outward appearances; some who suffer greatly are truly blessed by God (e.g. Job, Paul) while others who have wealth and health are not. However, the point remains that spiritual blessedness is not principally material or of this world. It is in Christ and is fully experienced in the new world. It is heavenly in origin and expression.

This means that all those who focus upon material blessings are misled. Charismatics who concentrate upon money, prosperity, continual health, success and so on, are mistaken and deceived. God is not principally interested in such things, he is interested in our character.

Then again, all those devices and pathways to supposed blessedness that are not in Christ, not spiritual and not Biblical are not only doomed to failure, but are likely to be pagan. Today many are falling into old mystical disciplines wrapped up on modern devices. All these take on some form of a mystical ascent upon a ladder of some discipline or another, which focus upon achieving emptiness and passivity. Some use music, some use asceticism, some use hedonism, some use forms of hypnotism and meditation, but they all centre upon losing the self and plunging into emptiness, in the delusion that this will bring them close to God. Pagans have done this for millennia and various heretics have done it for centuries. It is pagan mysticism and evil. We have seen that blessedness results from originating in Christ and new life and also from doing things based on that life, not emptiness and letting go.

Furthermore, all those disciplines which originate in occult practices will also bring no blessedness but will bring delusion. For instance, there is no spiritual blessedness in falling over backwards upon the touch of a leader. This is utterly unbiblical but is common in eastern occult movements and worldwide shamanism.

All those who promote the idea of spiritual blessing through the giving of money are liars and charlatans. Even the world can see that rich leaders living in luxury dispensing healing to poor people on the giving up of what they cannot afford is a great evil. When the apostle Peter was asked by Simon to have the gift of passing on the Spirit in payment for money he said, 'Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!' (Acts 8:20).

We could continue listing where blessedness is not found, but as this paper focuses on where it truly exists, the reader can compare modern experiences with this and determine what is true or false for himself.

Conclusion

There are two people in Scripture and history: those who are cursed and those who are blessed. By nature all men were cursed in Adam and suffer the effects of the Fall; but those who are chosen by God in eternity for salvation are included in Christ and become justified

by faith in time when God calls them. From this point the elect are objectively blessed because they are in Christ; they may not always enjoy pleasant circumstances, but they are blessed because they are in Christ. Thus Scripture continually demonstrates the tension between these two men in illustration after illustration: Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, David and Goliath, the wicked and the righteous, the new man and the old man, the elect and the reprobate; the faithful and the unbelieving etc.

Blessedness only exists in Christ. He is the blessed one and only those in him are truly blessed. The so-called 'blessings' of the wicked are just passing moments of pleasure, fleeting vapours that have no substance. There is no eternity in the happiness of the wicked. The suffering of the saints is part of their blessedness and it is not a curse. Suffering or happiness has to do with the intention behind it. The good circumstances of the wicked is part of the hardening and intensification of condemnation determined by God; the suffering of saints is intended by God for their good and for their development in godliness. Thus suffering and happiness is really determined by the judgment of the Last Day. The pleasure that rich, wicked people enjoyed will add to their condemnation, while the suffering of the saints will be interpreted as rewards.

Thus blessedness must be evaluated on heavenly principles, according to spiritual values in the light of eternity. Saints can find great encouragement in their suffering, but the wicked already have their reward and their temporary pleasures will turn into eternal judgment. Blessed is the man who is in Christ and pleases God.

Note: This study could have also looked at phrases such as, 'Blessed is he', Blessed is everyone' etc. to make the same point.

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