

Sermon – 09/10/2005 pm

Bless the Lord your God

Study Text: Deuteronomy 8:7-10

Do you like getting presents? What a silly question you say. Everyone likes getting presents! Well you might think so but there are people who give no indication that they like receiving gifts. There are those who take the gift, look at it and say ‘Oh I have one of these already, or, I don’t like this colour, or, this is a cheap brand’. They speak not a word of thanks, nor bless the giver. How do you think the giver feels in the face of such ingratitude?

‘Count your blessings, name them one by one, count your blessings see what God has done’ – so go the words of a well known hymn. And the Psalmist exhorts us to think upon the blessings the Lord has given us – *Bless the Lord Oh my soul and forget not all his benefits. The Lord satisfies your mouth with good things* (Psalm 103) . Those with a thankful heart will praise the Lord. Those having ungrateful hearts, those who fail to recognise all the good things the Lord has given them, can easily forget the Lord himself.

Material Blessings

When you have eaten and are full you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land he has given you (8:10). Moses was again warning the people not to forget God when they entered into Canaan (*cf.* 6:12). They were still eating manna which the Lord sent them every day. They were totally dependent on the Lord.

When they entered Canaan the manna ceased, and they ate the produce of the land (Joshua 5:12). Moses told them they would eat wheat and barley, pomegranates, figs, grapes, olive oil and honey. They would have a great variety of food and lots of it – there would be no scarcity (8:9). They would even find metals in the ground. These would be of great benefit in making tools for their farming as well as for making weapons for defence.

In the fertile soil and with water in abundance they would now grow these crops for themselves. No longer would they have to wait for the Lord to send them manna from heaven every morning. In fact there would be springtime and harvest; the crops would yield in their season. They would have to store some of their harvest so as to feed their families year round.

The testing time in the wilderness was over. They had learnt that the Lord provides all their needs. They had learnt *that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*. God was giving them greater responsibility. It was as if he was saying ‘Once I fed you every day but now you are more mature, now I am giving you the resources and you can manage more for yourself’. ‘You are my people living in the land I gave you. Enjoy life in the good land but remember to thank me, remember to glorify me among the nations’.

However, an abundance of good things can be just as testing to one's trust in God as a scarcity. With hunger the people complained. In Proverbs we read that with poverty comes the temptation to steal (Proverbs 30). But with an abundance, with riches and wealth, the temptation is to forget the Lord and to say 'who is the Lord' (Proverbs 30).

In this good land the people might start to think *with the might of my hand I have gained this wealth* (8:17). Like the rich fool Jesus spoke about they might say *what shall I do since I have no room to store all my crops* (Luke 12:17). He forgot God who gave all the resources he needed to get that crop. He gave no thanks to God; he *was not rich toward God*.

It would be interesting to examine the relationship between wealth and worship in the history of our own nation. We live in prosperous times – we have never had it so good. But what do we see with regard to people worshipping God? It all happens in the heart of course. Our children learn the ways of the world from a young age unless taught otherwise.

'Study hard so you can get a good job and be secure for life'. Many parents have inadvertently set their own children on this road to forgetting the Lord. Riches in themselves are not evil but if you set your heart upon them and turn your heart away from the Lord...there is the danger!

God made this world and gave it to man. He made himself known in the things that he created, *his eternal power and divine nature being seen and understood in the creation* (Romans 1:20). Whatever we have, the Lord has provided. But what happened? *Although they knew God they did not glorify him as God nor were they thankful...and God gave them over* (Romans 1:21).

Spiritual Blessings

Whilst the focus of Deuteronomy is upon material blessings in the good land we must not forget the spiritual blessings we have as believers in Jesus Christ. *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). In Christ we have been made alive, in Christ we have been redeemed from sin and death, in Christ we have been made citizens of heaven above.

Remember that if you are in Christ you are a new creation – *old things have passed away; behold all things are new* (II Corinthians 5:17). In Christ we have a glorious hope, a wonderful faith and steadfast love. Shall we not bless the Lord our God for the abundance of spiritual blessings we enjoy in Jesus Christ?

And Be Thankful

When Jesus healed ten lepers how did they respond (Luke 17)? Did they all come and give thanks to Jesus for making them whole? Only one returned to thank Jesus – a Samaritan. *With a loud voice he glorified God, and fell down on his face at Jesus feet giving him thanks*. The man that gave thanks drew near to Jesus and was blessed – *your faith has made you well* said Jesus.

You shall bless/praise the Lord your God said Moses. To do this they must acknowledge God as the giver of every good and perfect gift and be thankful. Thankful hearts will not forget the Lord.

David gave thanks to God in his prayers – *Oh give thanks to the Lord for he is good* (Psalm 107, 105, 106). He praised the Lord and exalted his name (Psalm 144, 147). He did not forget all the benefits that the Lord had given him.

The apostle Paul similarly gave thanks to God in his prayers. See how he commences his letters – with a prayer of thanksgiving. *We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ praying always for you* (Colossians 1:3). What did he give thanks for? He thanked God for the salvation, for the new life, of those who believed. He gave thanks for spiritual blessings they enjoyed – *your faith in Christ Jesus; you love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven* (Colossians 1:4, 5). Faith, hope and love, these are wonderful gifts that we have received from the Lord. Do you thank him for them?

Nor were they thankful (Romans 1:21). These words from Romans should sound great danger to our ears. When people stop giving thanks to God for all his goodness they are in great danger of falling away. They see and they enjoy the wonderful blessings of God their Creator, they enjoy the spiritual blessings of life in Jesus Christ, but they are not thankful.

Many no longer pray before a meal. The food goes on the table and everyone dives in without a word of thanks to the Lord who sends the rain and the sunshine for the crops to go. ‘Oh, we did it all ourselves’ they are say. I worked hard and grew this food or bought this food. This was the danger that Moses saw coming when the people of God entered into the good land of Canaan.

It may start in a small way but soon spreads to all of life. ‘Why bother praying at all for I can work hard and get all I want. Why bother reading the Bible when I could be spending that time earning more money. Why go to church when I need rest from all my hard work’. So it is that we have a generation that has forgotten the Lord who gives all these good things to us.

Bless the Lord. Does this seem strange to you – to bless the Lord. We usually think of the Lord blessing us and indeed he does. To speak well of someone is also a way of blessing them. We might use the word praise here instead. The Almighty God delights in the praise of his people. The leper returned to give thanks and with a loud voice glorified God.

In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you (II Thessalonians 5:18). Pray with thanksgiving. Be a thankful person. Look and see all that the Lord has done for you. See the material benefits he has given you. Maybe you have gone without at some time in your life. Many of your brothers and sisters live with only a fraction of what you have. So thank the Lord and praise him for his all his gifts. And do not forget all the spiritual blessings you have in Jesus Christ.

Rev. Dr. Dennis K. Muldoon