

Finding Blessing in God

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Introduction.

- A. As every Christian on earth can testify, being a Christian is not easy. The road to heaven leads uphill, not downhill, so every one of us has to struggle sometimes to climb it. Nor is the road a short one. Instead, we are expected to climb until the end of our lives, and after years or decades of hauling ourselves up the incline, it can get to be a little wearying. When we are weary, of course, is when we are most vulnerable.
- B. All of this means that somehow, some way, we need to learn to find refreshment on our journey. As with many spiritual topics, this is something that many in the denominational world take to extremes. They design their assemblies to create a feel-good experience, to convince everybody who walks through the door that God loves them and that they're pleasing Him, whether in reality they are or not. Such feelings can be deceiving.
- C. As true children of God, our goal has to be different. Just like everybody else, we need to be recharged, but the juice that fills our batteries is not the feeling that we have pleased God, but the knowledge that we have pleased God. God is not at all indifferent to our struggles and our sorrows, brethren. It matters to Him in ways that we can't even comprehend when we do what is right, even when it's hard. He acknowledges that and blesses us for it. It's in those things that we should learn to find our satisfaction and the energy to keep going, not in some contentment manufactured by our imagination. What matters is not that we feel blessed, but that we are blessed. Let's look this morning, then, at eight ways we can find blessing in God.

I. Blessing in Salvation.

- A. One of the first paths that the Bible describes to blessing in God is a surprising one. We can know that God is blessing us, and rejoice in that fact, by **HEARING WITHOUT OFFENSE**. This is the point that Jesus makes in Luke 7:23. In fact, friends, I daresay that until we learn to hear the word of Christ without offense, we cannot be pleasing to God. Obviously, this is not an easy thing to do. How many times in our studies with others do we run into people who are offended not by our presentation, but by the gospel itself? When a woman objects to the truth about baptism because that would mean that her grandpa has been lost, she is offended by the gospel. When a man gets angry because of the Bible's teaching about divorce, he is offended by the gospel. In fact, most people who hear the gospel will take offense at something in it.
- B. We can't let ourselves fall into that trap. People who are offended by Jesus will never know the blessing of God. Instead, we must work through the pain to find the blessing. And sometimes, friends, the truth is going to hurt. The Bible calls the word of God the sword of the Spirit, not the pillow of the Spirit, and God did not choose that metaphor by accident. Swords cut, and if we spend very much time around the truth, it's going to cut us. When that happens, our first instinct is to get huffy and blame the messenger. What should happen is that we get repentant and blame ourselves. The problem is never with the word. It's with us. If we see that, if we humble ourselves to the decrees of God, we should find comfort in the knowledge that we are blessed.
- C. Similarly, we can find favor with God by **BELIEVING**. Jesus reveals this in John 20:29. Thomas demanded physical proof of the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus gives it to him here, but also says that the ones who will be blessed by God are the ones who don't have the physical proof but believe the testimony of the word. This is a passage, then, that applies to every Christian here. We are not just the holy ones. We are the blessed ones. Through our obedient faith, we come to God in a way that no one else can. We form a relationship with Him that no one else can share. We know Him in a way beyond the understanding of anyone else.
- D. The blessings that we have through belief are so great that as long as we share in them, nothing else should be able to overturn our tranquility and contentment. Everything else in our lives can go smash, but as long as we have Jesus, we can know that in the end, everything's going to work out fine. And yet, despite the greatness of this blessing, too much of the time we forget it, and we focus on all the little things that are going wrong instead of the one huge thing that is perfectly right. Let's work on changing that. Just for the next week, every morning when we wake up, let's say to ourselves, "I don't know how this day is going to go, but I know that I have Jesus, and that's all that matters." Maybe we need to leave a sticky note on the alarm clock or the bathroom mirror to remind us, but if we do remember, it will transform the way we see our lives.
- E. Also as part of this, we find blessing by **BEING FORGIVEN**. Consider the quotation from the Old Testament that Paul repeats in Romans 4:7-8. This, friends, should be a blessing that we share in every time we sin and repent. When we do that, it should feel like a weight lifted from our shoulders. We should not just understand that we are forgiven, but feel that we are forgiven, and know that everything's all right again with God.
- F. For many of us, that's easier said than done. Perhaps we feel like we got off too easily, or perhaps we find ourselves voicing the same doubts expressed by that evil little hymn, "Did You Repent, Fully Repent?" Folks, I have searched the Bible from beginning to end, and there is not a single verse that says or even implies that there are degrees of repentance, and that some degrees aren't good enough. In Scriptural terms, either we've

repented or you haven't, and there is no in-between. I can't help but wonder how many perfectly forgiven Christians have spent sleepless nights fretting over whether they have fully repented or not, all because of the false teaching in that hymn. Brethren, there may be spiritual problems in our lives we should be anxious about, but that isn't one of them. We need to trust in the blessing of the grace of God instead.

- G. On the flip side of the coin, we can also share in the blessings of God by **DOING COMMANDMENTS**. We sing about this all the time in a hymn that actually IS based on Scripture, and that Scripture is Revelation 22:14. God is willing to forgive us, but what He really wants from us is righteousness, and if we are righteous people, He rejoices to see it. There are usually tangible blessings that accompany our righteousness in this life, but we are certain of receiving the blessing described in this verse. Only those who do the commandments of God have the right to taste the joys of eternal life and to enter into heaven. That's a blessing that we have to dedicate our lives to finding, but once we do, it will be well worth it.

II. Blessing in Enduring.

- A. As part of this, we also encounter blessing in **ENDURING TEMPTATION**. James comments on this very point in James 1:12. Sometimes, this can be a difficult thing to remember. We talk about the enticements of sin for a reason. Sin is very alluring and very enticing, and when we resist the temptation that the devil waves in front of us, a lot of the time, that can be almost disappointing. There's part of our mind that regrets missing out on all the fun, that wonders what the sin would have been like if we had joined in it.
- B. Friends, that's exactly the opposite of the way that we need to think. Remember: the enticement and allurements of sin is always a lie, and if we pursue it, we will end up somewhere we don't want to be. Because that's so, we shouldn't be regretful about the sin we resisted. We should be glad about the pain that we avoided. Even more than that, we should rejoice in the knowledge that we have done what is right and we have made God happy, and that God is going to bless us for it. Joy is found in righteousness, not sin.
- C. Of course, temptation is not the only thing that we have to endure as Christians. We can also find blessing by **ENDURING TRIAL**. James discusses this idea in James 5:11. In our lives, trial is just about always a two-edged sword. It has the potential to pull us away from God, or to push us toward Him. We can give into the devil whispering in our ear. We can say that if God really loved us, He wouldn't let this happen to us. On the other hand, we can recognize that although God wants us to be happy, more than that, He wants us to be useful and righteous, and will sometimes allow trial in our lives to produce both. When we endure instead of faltering, then, we see the results that God wants. I don't think the crabapple trees in my yard are happy when I come along and lop off limbs in the springtime. I don't think they'd vote for that if I gave them a vote. However, that pruning process makes the trees stronger, healthier, and more beautiful. Sometimes, we just need to recognize that God has to prune us too, and learn to look for His blessing in the result.
- D. We can also know that we are favored by God through **SUFFERING REPROACH**. Peter brings this up in 1 Peter 4:14. This is a blessing that will only emerge at a higher level of service, a level that most of us don't reach most of the time. The Christians who are under discussion here have been so dedicated to doing what was right and so conspicuous and noisy about it that the non-Christians around them have begun to blaspheme Jesus because those Christians are getting on their nerves. Can you remember the last time that you were reproached for the name of Christ? I can't, and for me and those like me, that's a problem.
- E. Here's why: as this passage presents the reproach of Christ, it's not a prerequisite for future blessing. It's evidence of continuing blessing. Remember, Christ didn't win any popularity contests when He was on earth, and if we walk far enough in His footsteps, we won't win any popularity contests either. But so what? So what if we find the reproach of men? If we imitate Christ that much, we are glorifying Him and demonstrating that we are filled with His spirit. Friends, more than anything in this life, I want to be like Jesus. I want people to look at me and see Jesus, and if they look at me, see Him, and don't like what they see, they're still seeing Him. I have succeeded in being like Christ. What greater blessing can there be than that?
- F. Finally, we find the blessing of God by **BEARING FRUIT**. This idea appears in Hebrews 6:7. In context, here's what's going on in this verse. The Hebrews writer is in the middle of a comparative analogy. On the one hand, he describes Christians who fall away as a worthless field, that despite being planted and watered, only grows weeds. On the other hand, he describes Christians who remain faithful as a fertile field that responds to all the attention given to it by bearing fruit. For bearing fruit, it is blessed by God.
- G. We need to look for blessing in our lives, then, by bearing fruit as well. As this passage makes quite clear, God does not rejoice in Christians who sit around like lumps and never actually do anything for Him. Instead, God rejoices in and blesses the Christians who roll up their sleeves and get to work. This doesn't mean that we have to get up and preach a mighty sermon or win a whole city for Christ, although if we do either one of those things, that certainly counts. However, the fruit that we bear in quiet, behind-the-scenes work counts too. When our Bible-class teachers come in and spend an hour or two cutting out decorations and copying lessons, that's bearing fruit. When our ladies spend a day visiting the sick and the shut-ins, that's bearing fruit. There's something that every one of us can do, and as we do it, we should know that God blesses us.

Conclusion. If you want to share in the blessing of God, you have to begin by coming to Him.