

Blessed
April 7, 2024
Allen Power

Genesis 30:25-43

This morning we're focused on God's faithfulness to bless His people. We use the terms "blessed" and "blessing" a lot. For example, when someone sneezes, we say _____. Anyone know how that got started? Illustration: The flight attendant's reaction at O'Hare. In your own words what does it mean to be blessed?

This portion of Genesis 30 is all about how God fulfilled His promises to bless Jacob.

When we last saw Jacob, he had fled for his life and sought a wife in his mother's hometown. There, he fell in love with Rachel, his uncle Laban's daughter, and committed to work seven years for her hand. Laban tricked Jacob into marrying her older sister Leah instead. Jacob agreed to work another seven years to marry Rachel as well. Over fourteen years, he had twelve children with his wives and concubines. Laban continued to cheat Jacob but now Jacob wanted to go back to Canaan.

Genesis 30:25–34 (NLT) — **25** Soon after Rachel had given birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Please release me so I can go home to my own country. **26** Let me take my wives and children, for I have earned them by serving you, and let me be on my way. You certainly know how hard I have worked for you." **27** "Please listen to me," Laban replied. "I have become wealthy, for the Lord has blessed me because of you. **28** Tell me how much I owe you. Whatever it is, I'll pay it." **29** Jacob replied, "You know how hard I've worked for you, and how your flocks and herds have grown under my care. **30** You had little indeed before I came, but your wealth has increased enormously. The Lord has blessed you through everything I've done. But now, what about me? When can I start providing for my own family?" **31** "What wages do you want?" Laban asked again. Jacob replied, "Don't give me anything. Just do this one thing, and I'll continue to tend and watch over your flocks. **32** Let me inspect your flocks today and remove all the sheep and goats that are speckled or spotted, along with all the black sheep. Give these to me as my wages. **33** In the future, when you check on the animals you have given me as my wages, you'll see that I have been honest. If you find in my flock any goats without speckles or spots, or any sheep that are not black, you will know that I have stolen them from you." **34** "All right," Laban replied. "It will be as you say."

- Verse 35: Crafty Laban moved all the "speckled or spotted" male sheep far away from where Jacob was in another attempt to cheat Jacob in this new "comp" plan.
- Verse 36 says, Jacob stayed and did his job, but he had his own crafty plan.
- Jacob employed a strange sheep breeding technique. He peeled poplar branches to be streaked with white and put them in the watering troughs at breeding time. He focused this weird technique on the strongest sheep.

Genesis 30:41–43 (NLT) — **41** Whenever the stronger females were ready to mate, Jacob would place the peeled branches in the watering troughs in front of them. Then they would mate in front of the branches. **42** But he didn't do this with the weaker ones, so the weaker lambs belonged to Laban, and the stronger ones were Jacob's. **43** As a result, Jacob became very wealthy, with large flocks of sheep and goats, female and male servants, and many camels and donkeys.

- How did Jacob's proposal demonstrate his faith in God to provide?
- How did the "branches in the trough" possibly demonstrate a lack of faith?
- Laban moved the spotted, streaked male sheep but Jacob still prospered. Why?
- We saw in Genesis 28 that God made some promises to Jacob:
 - Land and prosperity (28:13 also promised to Abraham) – Provision.
 - Make his descendants a great nation through which all the families of earth would be blessed (28:14 also to Abraham) – A blessing to others.
 - God's presence and protection (28:15) – Presence and protection.
- We might wonder: What does it really mean to be blessed by God?
- We tend to change the "S's" in blessed into dollar signs. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were promised prosperity, but God was building a nation through them.
- Being blessed by God includes material provision (Phil 4:19) but despite what the "prosperity gospel" teachers say, scripture doesn't promise great wealth.
- In the beatitudes Jesus said His blessing (meaning "happiness") would come to those who *"realize their need for him...those who mourn...those who are humble...those who thirst for justice...those who are merciful...those who are pure...those who work for peace...those who are persecuted."* (Mt. 5:3-10 NLT)
- Jesus didn't say blessings meant expensive stuff. Quite the opposite. (Matthew 6:33; Luke 12:15; John 16:33; Matthew 5:11–12) [See in footnote below]ⁱⁱ
- The New Testament tells us being blessed by God is better than material wealth.
- John MacArthur writes: *"[The] New Testament meaning of "blessed." [is] an inner peace...bliss...happiness...joy that is not produced nor affected by circumstance. This state of unshakeable well-being is how God desires His children to live."*ⁱⁱⁱ
- Another commentator wrote: *"Blessed speaks of our inner state of well-being, the prosperity of our souls in Christ. Blessedness comes from unhindered fellowship with God the Father through our Lord Jesus. To be blessed is to experience the full impact of God's presence in our lives now and for all eternity."*^{iv}
- God's blessings are not just material provision or emotional peace. For those who have trusted Christ as Savior and Lord, His blessings are spiritual and eternal. In Ephesians 1:3-11 Paul wrote of these spiritual blessings in Christ:
 - ³ *All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ.*^v [What are the blessings we receive through trusting Christ?]
 - Before He made the world God chose to love, adopt us, and make us holy.
 - He is so rich in kindness and grace that He purchased our freedom (from sin and death) with the blood of His Son and forgave our sins.
 - He has showered us with His kindness, wisdom and understanding.
 - He has revealed that Christ will be King, and we will have an inheritance.

- Does God bless only Christ-followers? No. In His sovereign will He chooses to materially bless those without faith in Him for His divine purposes.
- If God blesses us, why do we care if He blesses faithless or even evil people? They will miss the greatest blessing of all: Eternity in Heaven with Him.
- Jacob displayed faith and great work ethic (good things) but then tried to “help” God. Do we sometimes think WE are the source of our blessings (pride)?
- Work ethic is biblical, (2 Th. 3:10) but God’s blessings are a gift not a transaction.
- James 1:17: *“Whatever is good and perfect is a gift... from God our Father...”*
- 1 Corinthians 4:7 asks, *“What do you have that God hasn’t given you? And if everything you have is from God, why boast as though it were not a gift?”^{vi}*
- Think of it this way, good parents don’t expect young children to “earn their keep” but we do want them to learn to do their chores.
- God’s blessings come from Him as a gift, but He expects us to “do our chores.”
- Is it possible to miss God’s blessings because of sin? We don’t earn God’s blessings and He blesses us way beyond anything we deserve. However, our obedience to Him does result in blessing [see Psalm 1:1-6 in the footnote]^{vii}.
- Unconfessed sin doesn’t remove a Christ-follower from God’s family, but it does interfere with our relationship with God. [See verses in the footnote below]^{viii}
- We are not only blessed for our own good; we are blessed to BE a blessing.
- Jesus said in Luke 6:38 (ESV) *“...give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over..For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”* He blesses us so we can bless others.
- God has promised His presence, His protection, His power, His peace.
- We could spend a week in scripture exploring all God’s blessings, but our time is limited, so let’s leave with one last practical suggestion as our TAKEAWAY.
- Sometimes we get focused on what we lack and forget how blessed we are.
- Psalm 103 tells us to *“never forget the good things...God has done for us.”^x*
- Reflecting on our blessings every day gives us a more grateful perspective on how blessed we are by God. Two songs came to mind. One is a favorite hymn:
- *“When upon life’s billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.”^x*
- The other is not a hymn, yet still a great reminder for insomniacs like us:
- *“When I’m worried and I can’t sleep
I count my blessings instead of sheep
And I fall asleep counting my blessings”^{xi}*
- Jacob was busy counting “speckled” sheep while God was heaping countless blessings on him. Let’s always make counting our blessings a big part of our worship to our Heavenly Father, the Giver of all good gifts.
- Let’s start by recalling the greatest blessings of all; God’s words in Psalm 32:1–2 *“Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.
Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity...”*
- And what He said in Jeremiah 31:3 *“I have loved you with an everlasting love;
therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.”*

ⁱ **μακάριος makarios**; from **μάκαρ makar** (*happy*); *blessed, happy*:—blessed(1), blessed(46), fortunate(1), happier(1), happy(1).ⁱ

ⁱⁱ **Matthew 6:33 (ESV)** — **33** But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Luke 12:15 (ESV) — **15** And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”

John 16:33 (ESV) — **33** I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

Matthew 5:11–12 (ESV) — **11** “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. **12** Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

ⁱⁱⁱ https://www.masters.edu/thinking_blog/what-it-means-to-be-blessed/#:~:text=This%2C%20too%2C%20is%20the%20basic,desires%20His%20children%20to%20live.

^{iv} <https://www.gotquestions.org/mean-to-be-blessed.html>

^v Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Eph 1:3). Tyndale House Publishers.

^{vi} Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (1 Co 4:7). Tyndale House Publishers.

^{vii} **Psalm 1:1–6 (NLT)** — **1** Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers. **2** But they delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night. **3** They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do. **4** But not the wicked! They are like worthless chaff, scattered by the wind. **5** They will be condemned at the time of judgment. Sinners will have no place among the godly. **6** For the Lord watches over the path of the godly, but the path of the wicked leads to destruction.

^{viii} Isaiah 59:2 (NIV): "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear."

Psalm 66:18 (NIV): "If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened."

Proverbs 28:13 (NIV): "Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy."

James 4:3 (NIV): "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures."

^{ix} Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Ps 103:2). Tyndale House Publishers.

^x https://hymnary.org/text/when_upon_lifes_billows_you_are_tempest

^{xi} Count Your Blessings Instead of Sheep Lyrics © Berlin Irving Music Corp., Irving Berlin Music Corp