

## Blessings of God

Have you ever thought about the blessings that God pours out on us each day? There is a lady who is in her late 70's and has a prayer blanket ministry. Literally thousands of people in eastern North Carolina have received blankets that she makes. Some are delivered to the children's hospital in Greenville. Others are given to people she knows or hears of through her many connections. Each evening, as she signs off of Facebook, she encourages each of us to count our blessings. She states that she does and they grow more each day.

As we look at the blessings of God, we may find that we tend to limit God. The things which we want, as a blessing from God does not come close to the blessings that God can and does provide. In the letter to the Ephesians, we find this idea for the abundance of God expressed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter.

**For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.**

**Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:14-21 NASB)**

The spirit that lives within us gives us strength and, within this passage, we are told that God is able to do far more than we think or ask. God is not limited by our vision of Him.

The idea that God is not limited when it comes to giving blessings, may also be seen early on in the period of the kings of Israel. Let's take a few minutes to read through a portion of 1 Kings the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter. David had died and Solomon became the king. There were some consolidation moves that took place to help ensure that Solomon would transition into the role of king. Solomon had gone to Gibeon and made sacrifices to God. In the 5<sup>th</sup> verse, God appears to Solomon in a dream.

**In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night; and God said, "Ask what you wish Me to give you." (1 Kings 3:5 NASB)**

Solomon was a young man when he became king. The exact age is not known and scholars pick between 14 years old to less than 30 years old. Since the first verse of 1 Kings 3 mentions a marriage, he was most likely at least 20. It really only matters when we reflect on a young man asked by God for a blessing. What would we ask in a similar situation? Perhaps we would ask for riches, a long and prosperous reign, or maybe the satisfaction of our human appetites. Let's continue to read and find what Solomon asked from God.

**Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king in place of my father David, yet I am but a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. Your servant is in the midst of Your people which You have chosen, a great people who are too many to be numbered or counted. So, give Your servant an understanding heart (*Lit. a heart that hears*) to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" (1 Kings 3:7-9 NASB)**

Some suggest that Solomon asked for wisdom. However, what he asked for is an understanding heart. He wanted to hear with compassion and make judgements based on the qualities that God

holds dear. This should help us to underscore the importance of compassion and kindness toward all whom are loved by God. Basically, that covers everybody. The next verse tells us what God thought about Solomon's request. **It was pleasing in the sight of the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing. (1 King 3:10 NASB)**

God asked Solomon to name what he wanted from Him. Here we have a young man assuming the throne over the children of God and God is ready to grant a wish. Solomon does not go for petty self-centered wishes. He goes for the ability to judge with compassion and justice. That pleased God. This may be a hint for us. If we are seeking to please God, are we compassionate? Are we concerned about equity and justice?

In another example of the abundant blessings of God, we find that God went well beyond what Solomon asked for as his wish from God.

**God said to him, "Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice, behold, I have done according to your words. Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you. I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days. If you walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and commandments, as your father David walked, then I will prolong your days." (1 Kings 3:11-14 NASB)**

God is open with His answer to Solomon. God acknowledges that Solomon did not ask for personal things like long life, riches, misfortune for his enemies. God agrees to give Solomon his wish.

Then, we see God goes far beyond what was asked or expected. He gives Solomon riches and honor. Solomon will be known far and wide by other rulers for his wealth, splendor, and wisdom.

In a previous message, I said that God is not stingy. Here, we see the way God is toward Solomon. Solomon asked for God's help in using compassion to deal with the children of Israel with justice. He gives him what he asked for and then adds wealth, honor, and long life.

Jesus gives us some insight into the nature of God in His sermon on the mount. In the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter we read these verses, starting with verse 7: **"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him! (Matthew 7:7-11 NASB)**

In these few words, Jesus is telling each of us that if we want something, we need to let our desire be known to God. The original phrasing suggests that when we ask, seek, and knock; we are to keep doing it. It is not a superficial curiosity. It is a determined effort on our part to obtain that which we seek.

Jesus uses human terms to explain how God moves when we truly want something from Him. God does not and will not give us something harmful. We know not to give our children stones instead of bread to eat. We don't give our children snakes instead of fish. We know what is good for our children so, we give them the things that are good for them.

In like manner, when we ask God for something, He gives that which is best for us. He gives us better and more than we can imagine. God listened to what Solomon requested. He knew that

Solomon was sincere in his desire to do well in leading God's chosen nation so, He gave him what he asked for and so much more.

God has never given less than we need. God is not stingy. As we stated earlier this morning, God will give more than we think or ask.

**Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:20-21 NASB)**

We looked at just one example in God dealing with Solomon. Do we trust God enough to trust in His blessings for our life? Do we trust that God's blessings will exceed our wildest dreams?