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Psalm 120 - 134

"The Pilgrim's Progress - Part 3"

Pastor Gary Hamrick

In his continuing series through the Pilgrim Psalms, Pastor Gary provides specific biblical encouragement for every Believer in their journey of faith: God is a giver of many blessings, he heals us from our past, and he forgives our sins.

Psalm 128

Be Thankful For God's Blessings

1. A good working definition of God's blessing would be: God's underserved favor and goodness that he freely bestows upon us.
2. Pastor Gary said: "Please note that [God's] favor and goodness can take many different forms... I emphasize that because, unfortunately, in the modern American church, at least, there have been [two] opposite [and] extreme views that have emerged. And unfortunately, both of these [opposing and] extreme views have kind of relegated God's blessing to solely be about material things... So, on the one end of the extreme, when some talk about God's blessing, it comes through what has been termed the prosperity gospel. Again, the emphasis being that it's mainly about material things and tangible things... It's all about [the Lord] blessing your life with divine health, with success, with a great job, with a perfect spouse, with perfect kids, with everything just perfectly lined up in your life, because after all, God's favor and blessing is upon you so long as you are walking in faith, all of this abundance will be yours. But the problem with that is that you can have some good, godly people looking at their lives and really realizing that they have a not so perfect health, and a not so perfect job... [a] not so perfect bank account, and certainly [a] not so perfect spouse, and not so perfect kids. And then you can look at your not so perfect life and think: 'What's wrong with me? What have I done wrong that God has not

blessed me?’¹ ... Frankly, the other extreme is just as devastating and that extreme is the opposite view, which is the poverty gospel... [It’s] the idea that God... keeps us stripped from anything, and that what God really wants is for us to stay poor, because if we stay poor we [will] stay humble... And if we ever have stuff we [will] become corrupt. And so, it’s kind of this Puritan mindset that somehow happiness and holiness don’t go together. [Meaning] that if you’re holy you must not be happy, because that’s not a good thing. And, if you’re happy, you’re certainly not holy. [It’s] the idea that success and sanctification can’t go together... [God] wants to make sure we have little to nothing, because poverty equals purity... The problem with [the] second extreme view is [that] you have Christians who look at their lives and... they [see that they] are kind of successful, [their] bank account is pretty full, [they] have a sweet family, [and] life has been good, and so, the poverty gospel [them] feel like it’s wrong to have these things and to enjoy a good life.”

3. The Bible does teach that God gives us the ability to produce wealth.
 - a. **Deuteronomy 8:18** - *“But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth...”*
4. Many people in the Bible were richly blessed by the Lord, and the list includes men like Abraham, Job, David, and Solomon.
5. **Proverbs 10:22** - *“The blessing of the LORD brings wealth...”*
6. The Bible also warns against greed and the love of money.
 - a. **1 Timothy 6:10** - *“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”*
 - b. **Matthew 6:24** - *“No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”*
7. Pastor Gary said: “The Bible never condemns wealth nor does it uphold poverty as the pathway to righteousness... I want to make this clear so I just want to state this as plainly as I can. It is not wrong to have or desire nice things. The danger is found when the desire and pursuit after those things, and happiness itself, because of those things, become a greater ambition in life than holiness found in a relationship with Christ.”

¹ Pastor Gary shared the example of Job’s friends, who basically told Job that the reason all of the tragic things that happened to Job and his family came as the judgment for sin in his life.

8. Pastor Gary shared a number of Scriptures from the Old Testament and the New Testament to help bring clarity to a biblical understanding of God's blessing.
- a. **Genesis 1:22** - *"God blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and increase in number...'"*
 - b. **Genesis 9:1** - *"Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.' "*
 - c. **Genesis 12:2-3** - *"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."*
 - d. **Psalm 32:1-2** - *"Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit."*
 - e. **Psalm 40:4** - *"Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false gods."*
 - f. **Psalm 84:5** - *"Blessed are those whose strength is in you..."*
 - g. **Psalm 94:12** - *"Blessed is the man you discipline, O LORD, the man you teach from your law..."*
 - h. **Matthew 5:1-11** - Jesus made references to the blessings of God in the Sermon on the Mount.
 - i. **Mark 10:16** - *"And [Jesus] took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them."*
 - j. **Luke 11:28** - *"[Jesus] replied, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.' "*
 - k. **Ephesians 1:3** - *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."*
 - l. **James 1:12** - *"Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial..."*
9. The Bible makes it clear that God blesses us in big ways and little ways; in visible ways and invisible ways; in tangible and intangible ways; in good times and bad times.
10. **Philippians 4:11-12** - *"... I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want."*

11. God's blessings are for those who fear him.
 - a. **Psalm 128:1, 4** - *"Blessed are all who fear [this means to have a deep, reverential respect] the LORD, who walk in his ways... Thus is the man blessed who fears the LORD."*
12. God's blessings are given to us so that we can be a blessing to others.
 - a. **Genesis 12:2-3** - *"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."*
 - b. Pastor Gary said: "God blesses us, not so we can be a bucket, but so we can be a funnel!"

Psalm 129

Persevere Through Tough Times And Trust God With The Outcome

13. **Psalm 129:1-2** - *"They have greatly oppressed me from my youth - let Israel say - they have greatly oppressed me from my youth, but they have not gained the victory over me."*
14. Most Bible scholars believe this psalm was written about the 400 years the nation of Israel were slaves in Egypt.
15. A quick overview of the history of Israel includes the following periods of slavery, captivity, oppression, and slaughter:
 - a. 400 years in Egypt
 - b. 70 years in Babylon
 - c. More than 400 years under the Romans
 - d. Approximately 250 years under the rule of the Byzantine Empire
 - e. More than 400 years under the Muslim caliphates
 - f. Approximately 200 years during the time of the Catholic crusaders
 - g. Approximately 200 years under the Egyptian mamelukes
 - h. Approximately 400 years under the Ottoman Turks
 - i. They were under British rule from 1917 to 1948
 - j. They suffered terribly during the rule of the Nazis during WW2
 - k. The Jews understand slavery and oppression, perhaps more than any other people group!
16. The resolve of the psalmist is noteworthy, in that he wrote that *"they have not gained the victory over me... because [the Lord] has cut me free from the cords of the wicked."*

17. Pastor Gary said: “Listen to me on this! There might be some times in your life, in this journey between here and heaven, when people will oppress you, when people will insult you, when people will mistreat you or harm you, or betray you... It’s sin... but because sinful people occupy this world, sinful people will do sinful things to other people, and if somebody does something to you [that] is sinful, okay, give them to God and move on! But, do not let what people do to you to rob you of your future because of what they’ve done to you in your past... The Christian life is about persevering and it’s about trusting God with the outcome.”
18. [2 Corinthians 4:8-10](#) - *“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.”*
19. The psalmist asks the Lord to do what needs to be done!
a. [Psalm 129:5-7](#) - *“May all who hate Zion be turned back in shame. May they be like grass on the roof, which withers before it can grow...”*

Psalm 130

Remember That Forgiveness Is Only A Prayer Away

20. This psalm is counted among the seven psalms that are known as penitential psalms.
a. [Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143](#).
b. These psalms are about confession, repentance, and forgiveness.
21. The writer was in the depths of despair over his own sin, and his cry is for the mercy of the Lord.
a. [Psalm 130:2](#) - *“O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.”*
b. The Hebrew word for mercy is hanan, which means, to stoop down and show kindness to another.
22. David understood the filthiness of his sin and he cried out for God’s mercy after he sinned against God in the adulterous affair he had with Bathsheba.
a. [Psalm 51:1](#) - *“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.”*
23. [Psalm 130:3-4](#) - *“If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness...”*

24. Horatio Spafford wrote the famous hymn *It Is Well With My Soul*, and he made reference to sin and forgiveness in the third stanza: "My sin oh, the bliss of this glorious thought! My sin, not in part, but the whole, is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more; praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!"²

Discussion Questions

1. Read [Psalm 128](#).
2. What are some of the ways you've experienced the undeserved favor and goodness of the Lord in your life?
3. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's remarks concerning the two extreme views of God's blessing. (See #2 above)
4. Spend time talking about the Scriptures that warn about greed and the love of money. (See #6 above)
5. Read and discuss the lyrics to the hymn *Count Your Blessings*, written by Johnson Oatman, Jr., in 1897.³

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 has done.

Refrain:

Count your blessings, name them one by one,
Count your blessings, see what God has done!
Count your blessings, name them one by one,
Count your many blessings, see what God has done.

Are you ever burdened with a load of care?
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?
Count your many blessings, every doubt will fly,
And you will keep singing as the days go by.

When you look at others with their lands and gold,
Think that Christ has promised you His wealth untold;
Count your many blessings money cannot buy
Your reward in heaven, nor your home on high.

So, amid the conflict whether great or small,
Do not be discouraged, God is over all;

² http://hymnary.org/text/when_peace_like_a_river_attendeth_my_way

³ http://hymnary.org/text/when_upon_lifes_billows_you_are_tempest

Count your many blessings, angels will attend,
Help and comfort give you to your journey's end.

6. Either read each Scripture or select several to provide an overview of what the Bible has to say about God's blessing. (See #8 above)
7. Read and discuss [Philippians 4:11-12](#).
8. Allow the people in your group to talk about the ways the Lord is helping them to live a contented life.
9. How has the Lord blessed you for the purpose of being a blessing to others?
10. Read [Psalm 129](#).
11. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's remarks about persevering in tough times. (See #17 above)
12. Read and discuss [2 Corinthians 4:8-10](#).
13. Read [Psalm 130](#).
14. Spend time talking about what it means to receive forgiveness from the Lord.
15. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).