**Understanding Blessing**

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this paper is meant to be more of a discussion than a lecture

Jeremiah 17:7 “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord.

The word “bless” or “blessed” is used 389 times in the NIV bible (463 in King James) so it must be pretty important. But what does it mean to be blessed? What would you consider a Blessing? How do you know when you have been or are blessed? Is it a feeling? is it material wealth and success?

Psalm 1:1-3: 1 **Blessed** is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; 2 but **his delight is in the** law of **the Lord**, and on his law he meditates day and night.3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. **In all that he does, he prospers.**

Looking at this verse it tells us we are blessed, and God will prosper us, if we delight in the Lord but what does it mean that God will prosper all that I do?

Wikipedia defines prosperity as “the flourishing, thriving, good fortune and successful social status” and includes wealth, happiness and health.

### [Jeremiah 29:11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah+29%3A11&version=ESV) For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

I welcome God’s gifts of welfare and hope but is there more to it than that? Reading a verse like this makes me think that God wants me to have a good and happy life. But Is God really promising me a good Job, a nice home, Good health and friends?

There are many churches that preach a prosperity Gospel. a “name it” and “claim it” philosophy. (Tell God what you want and he will give it to you) Is that what the bible is teaching?

* Psalms 84: 11… no good thing will God withhold from them that walk in the Lord.
* Psalms 37:4 Take delight in the Lord and he will give you your heart’s desire.
* John 15:7 If you abide in me and my word abides in you ask whatever you wish and it will be given
* Proverbs 16:3 Commit to the lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed

Notice that these verses say that Ifyou “take delight in the Lord” and **If** you abide in Him. **If** you “commit to the Lord” meaning if you were really aligned with God would you be asking for worldly things that only benefit you? How does being Rich and popular glorify God? I guess it depends on what you do with that wealth and popularity. Maybe if I open my eyes and recognize all the gifts God has already given me, then I would realize how blessed I already am.

Maybe we are looking for the wrong blessings? Wealth, fame, popularity or maybe I just want an easy and pain free life. Are these the blessing the bible talks about? Maybe what we consider a blessing is not the same as what God considers a blessing. After all:

Isaiah 55:8-9 tells us “God’s thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways God’s ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are God’s ways higher than your ways and His thoughts Higher than your thoughts.

# 2 Peter 1:3 His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

Afterall God has already given us everything we need “for a Godly life” and not things just to make our life easier or fun or to increase our popularity.

in the sermon on the mount Jesus Said Matthew 5:8-9 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

# Maybe God is more concerned about your Heart than your happiness or comfort.

The Blessings in the bible are more often things that bring us closer to God but that is still good, right? Well Jesus continued in the Sermon on the mount to say:

Matthew 5:10 - 12 “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

# Psalm 119:67 Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I obey your word.

# Psalm 119:75 I know, Lord, that your laws are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me. May your unfailing love be my comfort, according to your promise to your servant.

We will get back to this in a moment.

### **🡪Promised Blessings**

Luke 6:38 Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure, you use it will be measured back to you.”

### Did you catch that? If you give then with the same measure blessing will be poured back on to you.

Matthew 6:31-33 So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

God will provide the necessities of life if we seek Him first.

### [James 1:17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+1%3A17&version=ESV) Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

So, all good things in life are a blessing from God. This includes talents, possessions, achievements, Family and friends. When you have these things, you are Blessed and should be thankful to God for that!

These are things we really need

Philippians 4:19 And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

But what about the persecuted? They often go without earthly things they need like food, health and/or shelter so is this a promise for the comforts of this world or the requirements to bring you to the next?

**🡪Persecution (**Lets get back to this)

Matthew 5:10 - 12 “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

1 Peter 3:14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed.

Did you catch that: people who are persecuted and suffering are blessed? Do you feel blessed during persecution and suffering?

1 Peter 3:14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled,

We read about Christians, starting with the disciples, being persecuted around the world and across the ages but do we really consider them “blessed”?

The Bible tells us that the persecuted are blessed.

James 1:12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

Romans 5:3-5 tells us we should **rejoice** in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

1 Peter 4:13 But **rejoice** insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

Have you ever rejoiced in suffering? Can’t say I have but maybe I should.

Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 4:7-9 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

What if you knew that God was drawing you closer to Him through your suffering? Afterall being closer to God should be what we desire and there for be considered a Blessing.

# Psalm 119:67 Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I obey your word.

# Psalm 119:75 I know, Lord, that your laws are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me. May your unfailing love be my comfort, according to your promise to your servant.

When everything in life is going right there is little need for Faith and trust in God. It is through affliction that we cry out to the Lord for help. It is through affliction that God draws us closer to Him and away from the world.

**Maybe the Blessings of the persecuted only come after they leave this world. Does real blessing only happen when our life is over and we get to heaven?**

Should I be concerned if I am not being persecuted?

2 Timothy 3:12 everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

God never promised that you will always be happy and content. Just look at the people closest to God in the Bible.

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 11:24-33 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.

This doesn’t sound blessed to me and in the end, he had his head chopped off!

Many of the Prophets in the Bible (those closest to God) were often tortured and killed (Even God’s own Son) and many Martyrs are held in the highest esteem for their acts of bravery standing firm in their faith.

IF you think about it was the martyrs like Paul (Brought Christianity to the world), and Martin Luther (Started the Reformation of the Church) and William Tyndale (Made it so we cloud all own and read the bible in English) Who have made the Christian faith available to us today . If it wasn’t for the Martyrs, we probably wouldn’t be Christians in church reading our bibles today.

So, we need to preserver in all things (Good or Bad) knowing that God is in control and will provide everything we need (Not what we think we need or want) as he sees fitting to advance His Kingdom. This should actually bring comfort and peace to us.

Numbers 6:24-26 The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and **give you peace**.

So, it Sounds like God can and will provide Good things here on earth but not necessarily those things we may want or even things we think we need unless what we want is to be closer to God and to receive and use the things, He give us to glorify Him no matter what the cost.

And those God chooses to live a persecuted life, to reach the lost for Christ, they will receive their rewards in heaven.

**Something to Think about 1:** Many of God’s promises of health, wealth, prosperity and happiness were given in the old testament if the Israelites obeyed God. If the Israelites disobeyed, they fell on hard times. (exception: The Prophets, who were closest to God, were often persecuted.)

Persecution was promised, in the new testament, to the believers of the new Church and God’s promises where more around giving us the things we need to advance his kingdom.

Philippians 4:19 My God will meet all your need according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus

Starting in the new testament many who followed Jesus often fell on hard times through persecution (like the prophets) but this had the strange effect of causing the Church to grow not to disperse. For example, China has the fastest growing Christian community and yet Christians there are persecuted.

**Something to think about 2:** Could it be through suffering (our own or others) that we can see our blessings more clearly? You have to experience hard times to truly appreciate the Good times?

**The suffering of this world last for just a moment in time were the joy of eternity in heaven last forever!**

**Closing**

So, remember that if things are going great for you, it is not necessarily a sign of God's approval. And if things are going awful, it is not necessarily a sign of God's judgment or rejection.

Maybe God just gives different people different opportunities: Some get wealth, Health and happiness but fight against pride and self-reliance and others get pain, suffering and persecution and need to stay clear of self-pity and anger. Both need to push aside obstacles to see God clearly.