

Because of the Covenant I can Bless Others

Hebrews 8:1-13

“Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, ² a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man. ³ For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer. ⁴ For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; ⁵ who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, “See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.” ⁶ But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. ⁷ For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. ⁸ Because finding fault with them, He says: “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah - ⁹ not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD. ¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ¹¹ None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. ¹² For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” ¹³ In that He says, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.”

Central to the structure of God’s relationship with men was the concept of the covenant. A *covenant* was more than just a *treaty*. It was both a legal contract and a formalized bond of life and death sealed with an oath.

The mediator of such a covenant was the priest. He was the

one who would represent man to God and God to men. He officiated over the sacrifice and he brought the blood to the altar. He went into the presence of God on behalf of men.

Tonight we are beginning a new series that I believe will change your life if you will take the Word of God and apply it to your every day living. In this series I want you to see how God's covenant relationship with his children actually puts us in partnership with God. And when you and I do our part, God comes alongside and some marvelous things begin to happen.

Tonight, I want to talk to you about how to be a blessing to other people. Let's start with God's covenant with Abraham. Clear back in Genesis 12, God says to Abraham, "Now the Lord said to Abraham, 'I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great. And so you shall be a blessing, and in you all the families in the earth shall be blessed.'" I want you to notice that God tells Abraham, "I will bless you." Then I want you to notice the word "so." I want you to notice the next phrase, "you shall be a blessing." You see, God's covenant with Abraham included God being a blessing to Abraham and Abraham being a blessing to others.

Now, we are going to see in a moment how this covenant that God gave to Abraham goes completely across to the New Testament and applies to us. But let's just think about the Old Testament for a moment. God did great things for the descendants of Abraham.

When the children of Israel were in captivity in Egypt, God walked alongside and said, "I am going to deliver you from the hard hand and heart of Pharaoh, and I am going to give you a Promised Land." And then the plagues, the Passover, the Red Sea, and all of a sudden the children of Israel are taken out of that incredible bondage and slavery.

Now, why did God do that? God was a blessing to the children of Israel so that other nations would see how he was blessing them, and realize that he was the living and true God and turn toward him. The problem was not God's blessing, the problem was that the children of Israel, because of their incredible selfishness

and *ingratitude*, they basically went around *murmuring, complaining, and chasing after other nations*. Instead of being a *peculiar, beautiful, blessed nation*, taking all the good things God was giving them and allowing them to be a blessing to others, they were *greedy, and ungrateful and selfish*, and pretty soon lost their identity and the beauty that God had intended them to have.

Take some of the great stories we love in the Bible. The story of *David killing Goliath*. **Why was that? So that the Philistines would see that the God of Israel was a great God and worship him.** *Daniel* in the lions' den. Why did this marvelous miracle happen *where the lions' mouths were shut*? As King Darius said, so that **"every knee in that nation would bow to the God of Daniel."** **You see, as you go throughout the Old Testament, you see God blessing his people for a reason: so that they could, in turn, be a blessing to others.** I find it is a principle almost entirely lost in the Christian community. I find that most Christians could better be described, instead of as givers who pass the blessing on, as takers, as sponges who suck everything up. **We grab hold of that blessing and hoard it, and hold it, and clutch it, and then wonder why the blessing doesn't continue to come.** Because **we have never learned to pass it on.**

This covenant is for the church of today. I am talking about *us*, Christian believers. Just as God had a covenant with the children of Israel, he has one with us as his children, as seen in Luke 22:19-20, "And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you." **Ladies and gentlemen, when Jesus Christ died on the cross God wrote out a new covenant with the church written in the blood of Jesus Christ.**

This covenant is for us to pass on to others. In His covenant to Abraham God said, "I will bless you and make your name great...and so you shall be a blessing, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Now, folks, if I stopped right now and asked, "Okay. How many of you want to receive blessings from God?" **Every hand would be**

raised. We all want God to bless our *families*, our *children*, our *health*, and *us*. We want him to bless us *financially*, and *in every way*. **And I can tell you today that God wants to do just that.** But, let me tell you something, you and I are responsible to take what God has given to us and pass it on to other people.

Luke 6:12-13 says, "About that time Jesus went off to a mountain to pray, and he spent the whole night there. The next morning he called his disciples together, and he chose twelve of them to be his apostles." **Why did he choose 12 to be apostles?** He was starting a new nation, the nucleus of a new community. There were 12 tribes in the Old Testament; so now in the New Testament he is taking 12 men to make up this new community for his new covenant relationship. Three years later, at their Last Supper, he said, "And I have made this new covenant with you."

In Luke 6 Jesus is preaching what has come to be known as "The Sermon on the Mount," where our Lord begins to lay out all kind of blessings. Now, the Jewish people understood the blessings of God to be physical health, material blessings - their barns would be full, their families would be taken care of.

The blessing Jesus promises is determined by our attitude as seen in Luke 6:20-49. That is why this passage is called the Beatitudes. In verses 20-26 He deals with our *attitude towards our circumstances*. **In verses 27-38 He deals with our attitude towards other people.** In verses 39-45 He deals with our *attitude toward our selves*. And in verses 46-49 He deals with our *attitude towards God*.

Now, it is obvious we are not going to have time to finish this section tonight, so I am going to go as far as we can with our *attitude toward people*.

First of all, remember that people respond differently to what they hear. Interestingly enough, this is exactly where Jesus starts teaching. Look at verse 27, "This is what I say to all who will listen to me." Isn't that amazing?

I have always been amazed, as people leave the Worship Services. There are those who have received a truth that is going to be life changing, and they walk out of here planning how they will use it. And others walk out, yawning and bored. Same message, same hour, same preacher. What happened? You see, taking and passing on the blessing is your choice, not mine. One of the greatest days of my ministry was when I realized that it is not my responsibility to change people. I am responsible to teach you these truths, but how you respond is your choice. Some of you will walk out of here and become incredible recipients of blessings of God. Others will walk out, and you will go through life wondering, "Why is it that that person blessed and I'm not?"

Secondly, remember to treat others as you want to be treated. Instead of putting others in their place, put yourself in their place. Now, that is known as the Golden Rule, "Love your enemies and be good to everyone who hates you." Now, I am going to stop right there. There is no sense in going to the next verse until I talk about this one. God says, "Do you want blessings? I have all kinds of blessings for you. I can bless you financially, physically, spiritually, mentally, and emotionally. I am ready to dump this incredible covenant relationship on you. If you want to receive it - love your enemies."

Now, I could stop here because many of God's children, absolutely do not walk the high road at all in this area. Far too many of God's children are low-road livers, people who carry grudges. You're mad, wanting to get even with somebody. You're not speaking to somebody. You've got family walls and barriers that you need to knock down and ask forgiveness for. You see, you want the blessings of God, but you are not willing to love your enemies. Look at verse 28, "Ask God to bless anyone who curses you." Try that on the 321. "Pray for everyone who is cruel to you." Do you say, "God, my boss is unbearable, bless him. Bless his kids. Bless the business." Now you say, "Bro. Cliff, this stuff is not possible." Yes, it is. Quit rationalizing, quit excusing yourself. Jesus is not going to tell you to do something you cannot do. Listen very carefully to this

statement: if you are not living by this standard, it has nothing to do with you not being able to live it. It has everything to do with you not wanting to live it. It is a choice that you have made.

Child of God, don't live on the low road, don't hoard your anger; don't allow bitterness to dominate your life; and then wonder why God does not bless you, and take care of you and put a hedge of protection around your family.

People, please stop acting like spoiled children and grow up in Jesus! Don't go walking out of church saying, "How is so-and-so so blessed? And why does that family seem to have a hedge of protection around them?" I can tell you why: they made a choice to love their enemies and not live like the world.

I don't have any enemies. Now, I have people who don't like me. That's their problem. You see, I learned a long time ago not to let somebody else's behavior toward me determine my behavior toward them. I am not going to allow someone else's incredible, stinking, rotten, ungodly attitude ever mess me up. That's their problem. By God's grace I have determined just to keep on loving, keep on smiling, and keep on just being me!

Listen; get this in your head, the moment I decide to act like those folks, I become like those folks. And that is a choice that I refuse to make.

Some of you are thinking, "But Bro. Cliff, you don't know what they did to me." I don't know. It doesn't matter. My issue is not what they did to you, my issue is what you are doing to yourself by harboring bitterness and anger and strife. Some of you need to grow up. Some of you had horrible relationships in the past, and it's time for you to give them up and go on. It is time for you to move on to another day and have a new thought, one that is positive, good, healing, and healthy. God says, "I want to bless you, but you have to be a high-road liver."

Third, remember that different people have different motives for what they do. In Luke 6:32-36 Jesus says, "But if you love those

who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.” **It is obvious Jesus gives us the wrong motives for our actions in verses 32-34.**

First, it is wrong to love those who only love you. Look at verse 32, "If you love only somebody who loves you, will God praise you for that? Even sinners love people who love them." **Don't say,** "They smiled at me, so I smiled at them. They were nice to me so I was nice to them. They complimented me so I complimented them." **Jesus said,** "Even the heathen do that. If you just return something nice for something nice, so what? That's no big deal."

Second, It is wrong to do something for people just to get something in return. Look at verse 33, "And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same." **Don't you love these people who say,** "You know, I *think* you bought lunch last time in 1976 so it's my turn. If I remember right, it was \$8.23." What a miserable way to live. **You folks that keep score, don't you get tired of that?** Don't you get migraine headaches trying to remember whom you owe or whom you are mad at?

Jesus gives us the right motive for our actions in verses 35-36. Because it is what God expects from us. Look at verse 35, "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward is great, and you shall be the sons of the Highest; for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." **There is no greater joy than to know that your life is simply a reflection of the Jesus who, because of His great love, loved you and saved you.** Ladies and gentlemen, the greatest joy of giving is to give expecting nothing in return!

Fourth, remember that you reap what you sow. Look at verses 37-38, "Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn

others, or it will all come back against you. Forgive others, and you will be forgiven. Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full - pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. With the same measure that you measure it shall be measured to you again.” **Folks, what you put into life is what you get out of it.**

Jesus said in verse 38, “The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.” **Listen to this advice that Jesus gives: whatever you give out will come back to you!** If you are *critical towards others, others will be critical towards you.*

Folks, read my lips - Life is not complicated. Jesus just gives us a few principles and just says, “If you just would live by these principles, I have an incredible blessing for you.” It is not an unachievable life: it is just one that requires a will and obedience. Now, watch this, “Forgive others, and God will forgive you.” If you are having a hard time forgiving others, you had just better talk to God about it because your attitude just might determine whether or not God can forgive you.

Then He says, “Give, and you will be given the full amount in return. It will be packed down, shaken together, spilling over into your lap.” **You see, when you give with a Christ-like attitude God will see to it that you are blessed in return!** In other words, God will reward your unselfish deeds with unselfish blessings!

I read recently in two health studies; one from the University of Missouri and the other from the Institute of Health in New York City. Listen to this. At the University of Missouri, they found that people who lived the longest were those that helped others and enjoyed social relationships. **The study in New York found that people who help others get what they call a “helper’s high,” and**

they report better health and an improved sense of well-being in their life. What you have is a group of medical personnel asking why one person lives longer than another. Why does one seem to have good mental health and one doesn't? And they conclude that people with good mental health are givers and people with bad mental health are takers. That people that have ulcers and stress and anxiety go through life wondering if somebody's got something they don't have. Isn't it amazing, the scientific community has finally discovered what Jesus said over 2000 years ago is still true today?

Jesus says, "I want to pour out unbelievable blessings upon you. I want to bless your family, I want to bless your health, and I want to bless you financially. But when you walk the low road, you don't meet the conditions you are not blessable."

Child of God, Jesus simply says, "If you become a giver in your lifestyle, I will bless you unbelievably." Now folks, that is not complicated. Anybody with a three - digit I.Q. can understand that one. The issue is not understanding. The issue is making the choice to obey that truth and living it, then watching God bless you.

