

Upping Your Blessings

Preached by Phillip Kayser at DCC on Sunday, April 3rd 2022

We have just come off of a long series of sermons on Women of Faith. I've decided *not* to follow that with a series on Men of Faith. But before we enter Passion Week, I do want to give *one* sermon that highlights God's instruction to men who desire His blessing. This is a Psalm that promises incredible blessings to men of faith. But we are going to start by asking the question, "What does it take for us men to be more fully blessed?" Psalm 68:19 says that God daily loads us with blessings - and that word "loads" refers to a heavy load placed upon a donkey. Every day God places huge loads of blessings upon us. So why don't we experience them? I believe that with many of us, God's daily blessings allotted to us fall off the moment they are put on. They don't stick. Or to use the analogy of a sieve for our lives and water for God's blessings, the water poured from heaven into our lives goes right through the sieve and does not fill us full to overflowing like was intended to happen. So to ask the question again, "What does it take for us men to be more fully blessed?"

In a sense we could look at the prerequisites of the previous Psalms of Ascent. Psalm 126 requires us to be delivered from the things that have taken us captive (pornography, bitterness, anger, etc) and to find our hearts held totally captive to the Lord. That's Psalm 126. Psalm 127 requires that we look to the Lord to build our house, to guard our city, to under-gird all our labors, to be Lord of our home, and to be Lord of our planning for the future. In fact, we are going to be singing Psalm 127 after the sermon. So when all of the Psalms of ascent are lived out, we can expect an increase in blessings.

But this Psalm all by itself is sufficient to inform us on that question. There *are* conditions to experiencing the fullness of God's blessing. Too many of us men are content with a small number of blessings, but I hope by the end of this sermon you begin to long for the Lord to more fully bless you. In fact, I am going to pronounce 12 blessings upon you if you are willing to receive them by faith.

I. This is a Psalm especially addressing men

And that this Psalm is especially addressed to men can be seen in verses 3-4, which speak of "Your wife [Well, obviously he is speaking to a man, right? - and]... your house... your children... your table. Behold, thus shall the *man* be blessed who fears the Lord." And the word for "man" is only used of males or warriors, and refers to a male at the height of his manly powers. Now, it's not as if God doesn't bless you women - He does. We've looked at your blessings in several of the previous sermons. But if you start praying this Psalm into your husband's life, or if you are a child, and you start praying this Psalm into your father's life, you will find an overflow of blessing for yourself as well. God blesses the whole family when the patriarch is healthy and when the wife does not tear down the home.

II. It is a Psalm rich in instruction for how men can be blessed

But men - do *you* want more blessing? Verse 1 pronounces a "Blessed," verse 2 pronounces happiness and things going well for you. Verse 3 promises satisfaction with wife and children. Verse 4 says once again, "Thus shall the man be blessed..." Verse 5 says, "The LORD bless you out of Zion..." This is a Psalm of blessing.

Nor do the blessings of this Psalm have to fall upon a tiny minority of believers. No. Verse 1 gives God's intention - "Blessed is *every* one who fears the LORD." Though Adam lost his enormous blessings through his rebellion against God, salvation begins the process of the restoration of all that was lost. That means God's plans for us are to restore blessings into our lives. This is an exciting Psalm.

Nor is this blessing for only a few moments of life. Verse 5 wants this blessing to rest upon you men "all the days of your life." Can we men really have this joy and blessing when life is so hard? And the answer is, "Yes."

III. There are four conditions to enjoying this blessing

But these verses do indicate that unless four conditions are met, you men will only retain a few of the many blessings God daily drops from heaven.

A. We must learn to live Coram Deo (title and vv. 1-6)

The first condition is that we men must learn to live Coram Deo - which is Latin for "before the face of God." It is clear that the person of this Psalm knows God in salvation, knows God in his daily labors, knows God in his family, and knows God in Zion. God is part and parcel of everything that he does. When we looked at the life of Tabitha, we saw that what made her works good works was that everything she did, she did by faith, to God's glory, by the power of the Spirit, who united her to Christ. And the same is true of this man. This Psalm is not asking men to add one more thing to their already impossible schedule. It is asking men to put all their labors, rest, plans, intimate relations, and their dominion into relationship with God and into kingdom perspective.

The relationship with God can be seen in two things. First, the covenant name Yehowah. Any time you see LORD in all capital letters it is referring to the covenant name Yehowah, which God uses with those who are drawn into this close covenant with Him. God is a God of judgment to unbelievers, but He is Yehowah - the God of close and intimate covenant relationship with believers.

But the title to the Psalm shows that we don't *instantly* achieve that close intimacy with God. We have to pursue it. The inspired title is "A Song of Ascents." These songs were sung by pilgrims as they approached the throne of Yehowah to worship and adore the one who had saved them and continues to bless them. William Kay said of the title,

"Go up, go up, my soul!" must be the motto of one who would enter into the meaning of these Psalms. They are a Jacob's ladder whose foot is fixed on the

earth, but the top reaches up to the “heavenly Jerusalem.” ...“Nearer, my God, to thee...”

The point is that knowing God is not a luxury of a pastor or a recluse who gets away from the hustle and bustle of life. Anyone can learn to know God *right in* the hustle and bustle of life. So, many passages speak of knowing God as being woven through every part of our ordinary life. For example, can we know God in the heat of the battlefield? Yes. Daniel 11:32 prophesied about the Maccabean soldiers fighting on the field that “the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.” Even their warfare was done *Coram Deo* or before the face of God. As another example, God told the youthful Solomon who doubted about his ability to rule the kingdom he had just inherited that he could rule well if he learned to know God. He said, “If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off...” (1 Chron. 28:9). The blessings of this Psalm are *not* automatic for believers; they come from knowing God and walking with Him. Psalm 10:4 should not be true of any believer. It says, “The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts.” Christians have God in at least *some* of their thoughts. But if you can go through an entire day without sensing that God is with you, you are missing out on a ton of blessings. Why? Because you are not walking *Coram Deo*.

Jeremiah 31:34 prophesies a glorious time in our future when *everyone* will know the Lord intimately - even the little children. It says, “they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD.” And because everyone will know the Lord in this moment-by-moment way, everyone will experience far more blessings than we do today - including prosperity, peace, long life, health, and other blessings. These conditions even apply corporately. But they certainly apply individually.

Your capacity to thoroughly enjoy your marriage and the rest of your life grows in proportion to how much you know God. That is not just an empty slogan; it is a reality. When you live your life *Coram Deo*, it is far more difficult for a nagging wife, an unreasonable boss, or anyone else to rob you of your joy and blessing. So the first condition to a truly blessed life is to know the Lord and to experience His presence every moment of the day. If you need a book that helps you to do that, I recommend Brother Lawrence’s book, *Practicing the Presence*.

B. Fear the Lord (vv. 1,4)

The second condition is to fear the Lord. “Blessed is every one who fears the LORD” ... Verse 4 repeats that condition: “Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD.” Next to knowing God, the fear of God is probably the most important key to a successful life. It will cause you to be God-centered in your marriage rather than man-centered. It will make you desire *God’s* “well done” more than anyone *else’s* “well done” on your job. It will give you the backbone to do what is right when peer pressure tries to get you to do what is wrong. We are commanded to fear the Lord over and over again in the Scriptures. They say that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. By the fear of the Lord we depart from evil. Study to develop a holy reverence for God and you will find yourselves blessed. Psalm 115:13 says, “He will bless those who fear the LORD, both small and great.” The word “small” implies that you can learn to fear the Lord even as a small child.

During the millennial glories of the future God says that the fear of the Lord will be pervasive and therefore God's blessings will be pervasive. So this too has a corporate dimension. Psalm 67:7 says, "God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him." So my prayer is that each of you would be blessed with the fear of the Lord so that even further blessings could fall upon us.

C. Walk in the Lord's ways.

The third condition is to walk in God's ways. "Blessed is every one who fears the LORD, *who walks in His ways*." Walking in God's ways amounts to following His laws and living by His blueprints. Those blueprints include the eight laws of harvest - laws that apply to farming, but which also apply to other areas of life such as economics, sowing of righteousness, conquering sin habits, etc. Just as it is impossible to violate the laws of harvest and expect to prosper as a farmer, it is impossible to violate the laws of harvest in any area of life and expect to prosper. It just won't happen.

But walking in God's ways involves far more than just the laws of harvest. God's Word gives us laws of logic to enable us to prosper in our thinking, and if you don't study logic, your thinking suffers. God's word gives us laws of economics to enable us to prosper in our financial deals, and if you don't study economics, your financial deals will not prosper as much as they could. And at Biblical Blueprints we are studying God's ways or God's blueprints for many other areas of life.

It makes sense that a house that is built without good blueprints will have problems. A car that is not maintained according to the blueprints of the manufacturer will break down. And God says that when we fail to walk in His ways, our walk will be messed up. Certainly you can ignore God's blueprints and still get by for a while just as you can get by without changing the oil in your car for a while. But it will eventually catch up with you and everything will come to a screeching halt. If you find that your blessings have been drying up, go back to the manufacturer's manual. If you are consistent at that, the car of your marriage should give you many years of satisfaction and fulfillment; the car of your parenting will improve; the car of your dominion will be prospered. As this Psalm says, you will be happy all the days of your life. Psalm 112:1 says, "Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who delights greatly in His commandments." That's another way of saying the same thing.

D. Seek first the kingdom of God (v. 5b)

The fourth condition is that we seek first the kingdom of God in everything that we do. The way it is worded in this Psalm is seen in verse 5 - "may you see the good of Jerusalem all the days of your life." For us it is the heavenly Jerusalem. Our work and rest, our pleasures and labors should all be done by the powers that flow from heaven and for the purposes of extending the kingdom of heaven on earth. And since His kingdom transforms everything on planet earth, there is no area of life that needs to pull us away from a kingdom passion. As Jesus said, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." What things will be added? Blessing upon blessing.

So those are the four conditions for multiplying your blessings 1) know God in a Coram Deo kind of way, 2) fear Him, 3) walk in His ways, 4) and seek first His kingdom.

IV. God gives a twelve-fold blessing

A. May God bless you with general blessings (v. 1,4)

So in the remainder of this sermon I want to pronounce the twelve blessings of this Psalm upon the men in this congregation who are committed to keeping these four conditions, and through the men to their wives, to their children, and to their grandchildren. And this should motivate you wives to build up your husband so that he can be a conduit of blessings.

Men, first of all, I pronounce the general blessing of verses 1 and 4 upon you. Verse 1 pronounces a general blessing, saying, “Blessed is every one who fears the LORD, who walks in His way.” May God bless you in every way. Don’t accept the negative pronouncements and bad attitudes of others toward you, your family, your plans, or any aspect of the dominion God has called you to. Reject their curses and their negative affirmations. Reject any Murphy’s laws that are pronounced against you and look continually to the Lord’s blessing. He can annul and reverse those Murphy’s Laws (which, by the way, do tend to be laws that statistically happen for unbelievers - so He can annul those Murphy’s Laws), and bring you out into prosperity. After all, if God is for you, who can be against you?

B. May God bless your eating (v. 2a)

Second, may God bless your eating. Verse 2 says, “When you eat... you shall be happy.” People don’t often think about it, but God appreciates foodies if they see food as a blessing from Him and eat to His glory. I did a search on my computer program for the verses that talk about God’s positive views on food and I found 3,025 verses that show how much God loves to bless His people with good tasting things. God could have given Adam and Eve nutrition out of a flavorless toothpaste tube. Or He could have blessed them with a half dozen vegetables and a couple fruits. That still would have been a blessing. But instead, God blessed them with such abundance of fruits, vegetables, grains, herbs, tubers, berries, nuts, edible flowers (such as cauliflower and broccoli), and edible stems that it would take us multiple lifetimes to run out of variety in taste, texture, smell, and other glorious aspects of the aesthetics of food.

Those of you who just chow down and don’t savor your food and don’t express your appreciation to God for the glorious tastes that He has allowed us to enjoy are actually short-circuiting a huge range of His blessings. I went to a horticulture website to see how many edible plants there are, and so far they have identified more than 20,000 different kinds of edible plants - each of which has unique smells, tastes, visual appeal, and textures. It’s astounding how blessed we are. God has been so generous!!! And God gave all of those to Adam and Eve for food. Have you been willing to experiment a bit and branch out adventurously beyond the Midwest meat and potatoes and to accept more of God’s

blessings of food? God wants to bless you, and some of you literally close your mouths to God's blessings. I'm serious when I say, "May God bless your eating." May He take away food allergies. May He bless you with a trained palate. The culinary side of life is a part of dominion that has exquisite blessings attached to it. The myriad different flavors in every kind of wine (for example) and every different kind of coffee bean (for another example) need to be experimented with to begin to appreciate how lavish our great God is. God desires to bless your eating.

C. May God bless your labor (v. 2b)

Third, may God bless your labor. The margin points out that the Hebrew word for labor in verse 2, יָעַעַח (yegeeah), refers not just to hard labor, but also to the fruits of that labor. Labor is not a curse (in and of itself). Labor that is cursed is fruitless labor and aimless labor. But digging your garden because you delight in the garden as a gift from God's hand transforms what could be frustrating into something enjoyable. Seeing your labor in the garden as a gift of service to King Jesus transforms it into something enjoyable. And of course, the labor that is blessed in verse 2 is not just gardening. It is every aspect of dominion, from mining crypto to putting \$1000 sights on your gun. All our labors must be done in faith, to God's glory, by the power of the Spirit, who unites us to Christ. When our labors are done in that way, God will bless those labors just as He blessed all the labors of Joseph's hands in the book of Genesis.

D. May God bless your emotions (v. 2c)

Fourth, may God bless your emotions. Verse 2 goes on to say, "you shall be happy." When I was in my twenties I went through a stage where I felt guilty any time I enjoyed something. I felt that giving my all to Christ meant that I needed to always be experiencing the pain of sacrifice. What I didn't realize was that I had not laid down my life *sufficiently* to Christ, because even my opinions about enjoyment were messed up and not Biblical. You see, Jesus is the Lord who dictates what submission and sacrifice looks like. I'll just use the apostle Peter as an illustration. Peter felt guilty having Jesus wash His feet in John 13 and said, "You shall never wash my feet!" He thought that denying this blessing was being humble and submissive. But it was in reality the exact opposite. He was not being humble and submissive by refusing Christ's gift of service. You see, *Jesus* dictates how we submit, not *us*. *Jesus* dictates how we sacrifice, not *us*. Jesus said, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." Peter, still seeking to be in control, over-corrects, but still does not show submission. He says, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." But that's not what Christ asked to do. Christ *does* call for sacrifice, but He does *not* call you to be an ascetic who refuses to enjoy God's good gifts.

Well, the same is true with regard to emotions. Some people feel guilty when they have happiness in intimacy, in food, in watching a movie, or in something else. But they fail to appreciate the fact that God has *commanded* us to relax and to enjoy the labors of our hands. He has called us to be happy. We are not walking in His ways when we reject what He calls us to enjoy. (Now, there can be over-indulgence that also fails to walk in God's ways, but that is not my focus this morning.) God wrote a whole book on the joys of marital intimacy - the Song of Solomon, yet how many people have hangups over that subject. They

are not fearing the Lord. They are not walking in His ways. They are walking in their own religious hangup ways. And that is because they have not gotten used to living every part of their existence before the face of God - yes, even in bed.

I did a count of God's plans for his people to have positive, joyful, happy, contented, and/or merry hearts and came up with 1,498 verses. Some of those verses *do* say that God will either curse or withhold blessings from those who refuse to enjoy life. Why would He give you more blessings when you refuse to enjoy His blessings? He is demotivated to give you more. For example, Deuteronomy 28:47 gives this as the reason why God sometimes withholds other blessings - "Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything." You aren't enjoying the abundance of His blessings so He decides not to give you more.

It is God's will for us to have emotional blessings poured out upon us. Zephaniah 3:14 says, "Be glad and rejoice with all your heart." It takes an act of the will to determine to do that, and to refuse to be negative in our thinking, and to stop moping. Nehemiah 8:10 says, "Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." Psalm 4:7 says, "You have put gladness in my heart, more than in the season that their grain and wine increased."

Is this gladness only to be experienced during rare occasions? No. Or at least it doesn't *need* to be. Psalm 5:11 says, "But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; *let them ever shout for joy*, because You defend them; let those also who love Your name be joyful in You." Paul said much the same in 1 Thessalonians 5:16 - "Rejoice always," and in Philippians 4:4 - "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" It's a command.

Of course, it takes walking in God's presence consistently to consistently have such good emotional blessings. Psalm 16:11 says, "In Your *presence* is fullness of joy; *at Your right hand* are pleasures forevermore." If you are lacking these emotional blessings, go back to the conditions. But let me bless those of you committed to pursuing those conditions. May the Lord pour out blessings of happiness, contentment, joy, and other emotional blessings upon you.

E. May God bless you with success (v. 2d)

Fifth, may God bless you with success. Verse 2 ends, "and it shall be well with you." Some people are so pessimistic that they always fear the worst. But we saw last week that fear is like faith - it latches on to its object. Often what we fear comes upon us. It is important to know that when we keep God's four conditions, even if the world thinks we are not successful, we will be. Even if we lose our job, our reputation, our house, or other things, no one can rob us of kingdom success. Ecclesiastes 8:12 says, "Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him." Success is measured by God's standards, not by the world's. 1 Corinthians 15:58 says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, *knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*" So my fifth blessing upon you is, "May God bless you with success that endures forever."

F. May God bless your wife (v. 3)

Sixth, may God bless your wife. Verse 3 says, “Your wife shall be a like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house...” God has chosen to bestow many blessings on the wife through the husband. And this is why she must be at the very heart of your home. Ephesians admonishes us husbands to nurture, protect and cherish our wives. We are to wash them with the water of the Word. When an angry thought comes to your mind, banish it with a look to this blessing that we might miss. God wants her to be blessed, and you are to be a blessing to her. May God bless your wife. May your wife not feel on the periphery of the home, but at the heart of the home. May the home be warmer because of her. May your home be cheerful and welcoming because of her. May she be a blessing to you as you are a blessing to her.

G. May God bless you with lovely children who will in turn bless others (v. 3)

Seventh, “May God bless you with lovely children who will in turn bless others.” I think all of that is bound up in the two figures of verse 3. The wife as a fruitful vine bears fruit, or children. It goes on to say, “Your children like olive plants all around your table.” Grapes and olive plants were the most highly prized plants in Israel. Olive plants were not only lovely to behold, but they gave shade, they produced medicine through their leaves and oil from their olives. Oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. And so that figure is saying, “May God bless you with lovely children who will in turn bless others.”

Now that’s not the way the world thinks about children. When people try to tell you, “Oh, yes, your child will go through the terrible twos, the thankless threes, the fiendish fours, and they pronounce other curses upon you (and those *are* curses), don’t accept those negative affirmations. Always affirm the Scripture by faith. By faith believe that God can do better with your children than the world does with theirs. Receive His blessing and by faith and hard work (yes it does involve hard work) prepare your olive plants to produce shade and medicine from their young leaves, and fruit as God intended. And if they aren’t acting like olive plants, come and get counsel, because we want God’s blessings to flow to your children and through your children to others. If the children aren’t being blessed, it is likely because something in them needs to be pruned or (even more likely) something in the parent needs to be pruned.

H. May God bless your home (v. 3)

And of course, another blessing is implied in all the metaphors in verse 3, including great conversations around the table. May God bless your home to be a life-giving home; a warm home; a welcoming home; a home from which the oil of the Spirit flows. May your children love gathering around the dinner table because that table us such a source of fellowship and blessing. May guests find blessing around that same table.

I. May God bless you through the church (v. 5a)

The ninth blessing is, “May God bless you through the church.” Verse 5 says, “The LORD bless you out of Zion, and may you see the good of Jerusalem all the days of your life.” The LORD bless you out of Zion. Zion was the name for God’s people, the church. And God delights to bless you and your family as you bring them to church. It is my prayer that you would find new blessings every single week as you sit amongst God’s people in Zion. May it ever be a place of blessing. But may you in turn be a blessing to the other members of Zion. And may our earthly church experience the blessings of the heavenly Zion.

J. May God bless your time and help you to redeem your time (v. 5b)

Tenth, may God bless your time and help you to redeem your time. May He bless your days - *all* your days. I have a handout that gives a Biblical philosophy of time. It’s quite different from the world’s philosophy of time. Verse 5 says, “And may you see the good of Jerusalem all the days of your life.” Seeing kingdom good all the days of your life requires all the days of your life to be devoted to God. It is hard to outgive God. When you give Him your time, God will bless you with multiplied time. So may God bless your time and help you to redeem your time.

K. May God bless you with grandchildren

Eleventh, “May God bless you with grandchildren.” We have a Biblical optimism in this church. We expect grandchildren and great grandchildren to be blessed by God. This psalm doesn’t want you to have a short term vision. Instead verse 6 says, “May you see your children’s children.” Even now you men and women can be anticipating the joy of having 15 or 20 or more grandchildren crowded into your home of blessing, and blessing each other. Make that part of your vision, and believe that this is God’s blessing for you.

L. May God bless you with Shalom (v. 6a)

And twelfth, “May God bless you with His shalom.” That Hebrew word for “peace” in verse 6 is shalom and refers to the reversal of everything negatively impacted by the Fall of mankind into sin. It includes within its definition the idea of inward peace and prosperity as well as outward peace and prosperity. It has within it the idea of inward healing and healing of the body. If you think of how extensively the fall negatively impacted this poor world, God can begin the process of reversing that in your life and in other people’s lives one at a time. So receive this blessing as well. May God bless you with Shalom.

V. Conclusion: Having received God’s blessings, may God bless others through you (Title and v. 6b)

Let me conclude this sermon with one more thought - If you by faith have received these blessings this morning, the concluding point is this: “Having received God’s blessings, may God bless others through you.” As Daniel Noor preached some Sundays ago, you were blessed so that you could be a blessing.

The title hints at this thought when it calls this Psalm a song of ascents. This was a song that was sung on pilgrimage as the Israelites set their hearts on Jerusalem and they gathered together. It's not a Lone Ranger psalm. They didn't just stay to themselves. This blessing can also be seen in the last phrase of the psalm, which says, "Peace be upon Israel!" How does that phrase fit into the psalm of blessing on the family? Well, it's easy. The family is the foundational building block of church and culture. And it is as the family is blessed that church and culture are blessed. But beyond that, it is as your family is raised to bring blessing to others, that you will be truly blessed yourself. Think of it this way: a lake that only takes in water and has no outlet, eventually becomes a stinking, scum covered, and lifeless dead sea. In the same way, a family that only selfishly takes in blessings but does not give out blessing to others loses its purpose for blessing and thus begins to lose the fulness of the blessings. May God bless you so richly that you are a blessing to others. Amen?