

Michael Apostol: Blessed to be a Blessing (13/10/18)

Introduction:

A college professor, had his Sociology class go in the Baltimore slums to get case histories of 200 young boys. They were asked to write any evaluations of each boy's future. In every case the students wrote, 'he hasn't got a chance.' 25 years later another Sociology professor came across that information. He and his students decided they are going to follow up on this 200 young men. With the exception of 20 boys who have moved or died, students learned that 176 of the remaining had achieved more than ordinary success. They were businessmen, lawyers, doctors. They have done exceptionally well. The professor was astounded and he decided to pursue the matter further.

Fortunately all the men were in the area and able to ask each of them, 'how do you account for your success?' In each the reply came very simply, 'there was a teacher.' The teacher was still alive so he sought her out and asked the old lady what her magic formula was for all this young boys. The teacher's eyes sparkled and her lips broke into a gentle smile. 'It's really very simple,' she said. 'I love those boys.' Never underestimate the power of a Godly influence in somebody's life.

It's a powerful thing. I want to suggest to you today that we can either affect people for the good or for the bad. No matter what are interactions is we either draw people to God or we push people away from God. Whatever the influence you have on somebody, never underestimate the power that you have. So my question to you is, 'What kind of influence have you been for God this week?'

Mother Theresa says this:* Spread love everywhere you go: first of all in your house. Give love to your children, to your wife or husband, to a next-door neighbour.... Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God's kindness; kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile, kindness in your warm greeting. - Mother Theresa.

Have you been kind this week? Have you smiled warmly this week? Have you brighten somebody's day this week? Or instead, you're the one that rumbled and complained. Were you the negative one in the meeting? You know what I love when you I go to work is when somebody comes at you in the hallway and say, 'good morning. Have a great day!' Just makes you feel good. Are you that kind of person today? I want to suggest to you today that, we can do a lot more for Christianity in the way we act than what we say. Never miss an opportunity to be good to someone. Never miss an opportunity to be a blessing to someone. So I ask you, have you been a blessing to someone else this week?*

I want to tell you a little story. Sometimes people think that this blessings and these things we do have to be fancy, have to be big. A true story is told by John Swatter. He says: "Mark was walking home from school one day when he noticed the boy ahead of him had tripped and dropped all of the books he was carrying along with 2 sweaters, a baseball bat, a glove, a small tape recorder. Mark knelt down and helped the boy pick up the scattered articles. Since they were going the same way he helped carry the burden for this young men to his home. As they walk, Mark discovered that the boy's name was Bill. That Bill love video games. He loves baseball and history and that he was having some troubles with the subjects that Mark had too. They arrived at Bill's house and he invited Mark in and so they decided to have a pop together. They became good friends. They played in the afternoon together. They had lunch together. All through high school they were good friends.

They separated some time after high school and they run into each other sometime later. Bill reminded him of the day years ago when they had first met. 'Did you ever wonder? Bill said, why I was carrying so many things home that day?' You see I have cleaned out my locker because I didn't want to leave a mess for anyone else.' 'I have stored away some of my mother's sleeping pills and I was going home to commit suicide. But after we have spent time together, talking and laughing, I realised that if I killed myself, I would have missed that time and so many others that might follow.'

'So you see Mark, when you picked up those books for me that day, you did a lot more than a simple gesture. You saved my life.' And I wonder today, how many opportunities we missed each day to be a blessing to someone. How many opportunities you missed each day. Someone is struggling. Somebody needs help. Somebody needs a smile and you could be one simple gesture away from changing their life. Never miss an opportunity to be good to somebody. Never miss an opportunity to be a blessing to somebody. Let's ask ourselves everyday, 'How can I be a blessing to others today?'

Genesis 39:1-6:

There is no better example of the power of a positive influence than the life of Joseph. I want you to turn to your Bibles with me to Genesis 39:1-6. A familiar passage. There are lines in here that are so powerful. Genesis 39:1* Now, let me back up. Remember the story of Joseph. Joseph is the young man whose father loved him more than the others. His father gave him a coat of many colours. He showed it over to his brothers and they did not like it. The chapter before this tells that Joseph came to find them and they were angry with him. And so you know what they planned? They decided to kill him. However, Ruben persuaded them to put him in a pit instead. He thought to come back later to actually rescue Joseph. While he was in the pit, the Ishmaelite's came by and the brothers said: 'let's sell him.' So here he is this young man is sold by his family into slavery. Imagine that. Yet I want to suggest to you today that God sometimes put us in a position because God has a bigger plan for us. If Joseph did not end up with the Ishmaelite's he never could have met Potiphar. See if he did not end up in the house of Potiphar, he never ended up in prison and then finally, at the feet of Pharaoh.

You see God had to have this happen because God knows the end from the beginning. Are you dissatisfied with the circumstances you find yourselves in? Are some of you in a job that you can't stand? Maybe some of you are in school and you wish you were in a different school. Maybe some of you living in a community that you wish you'd rather were not. Maybe God placed you there for a reason. That he has a purpose for you. A purpose that you just don't realise right now. A purpose that you can't see right now. A purpose that you may not realised till a few years from now. So I want you to hold tight as we go through the story. I want you to realise that whatever the place you are in your life right now, that it is for God's purpose and God is working that purpose in you. The Bible says in Ephesians 1:11* (READ)

The Living Bible put it this way, "Moreover, because of what Christ has done, we have become gifts to God that He delights in, for as part of God's sovereign Plan we were chosen from the beginning to be His, and all things happen just as He decided long ago." - Ephesians 1:11*

I need you guys to understand today that whatever it is whatever place you find yourself in today, that's where God wants you. So lets go on with the story verse 2 says this, "The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. - Ephesians 39:2

So get this. The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered. Joseph didn't prosper on his own. Joseph prospered because the Lord was with him. Another way of saying that is, 'Joseph was with the Lord.' The clear word Bible put it this way, 'Joseph determined to be faithful to the Lord no matter what the circumstance and the Lord was with him.' If you stay with the Lord in your circumstance, God is gonna prosper you. No matter what it is you're going through, "A greedy man stirs up dissension, but he who trusts in the Lord will prosper." - Proverbs 28:25*

"Misfortune pursues the sinner but prosperity is the reward of the righteous." - Proverbs 13:21*

Whenever you see righteousness there is prosperity. Whenever you see obedience to God there is blessings and prosperity. The secret is you got to trust God. You've got to trust the situation that you're in and you can't complain about it, you got to work the situation. We have to understand that where we are today is God's plan for you and for me. So I hate to say this to you, stop whining.

*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." - Jeremiah 29:11

God is a God that wants to prosper His people. God wants to make you successful. God wants you to be the best that you can be. God is not in the business of making losers. God is in the business of making winners. God wants to prosper you. And so we go on, *"Joseph determined to be faithful to the Lord no matter what, and the Lord was with him."

What's very interesting is when you go to the Book of Daniel, you will read something that is very similar. When Daniel was in a similar situation the Bible says, 'Daniel determined to be faithful to God.' So there's something that we have to do. We have to determine, we have to resolve in our minds to be faithful to God. Now get this, * "When has the master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favour in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned."

When you become successful because of God people will notice. Potiphar noticed that he was successful and that success was not of him, but was of God. So when you are successful and when you follow God's plan, God will bless you and people will notice. Because when God blesses you with His favour, it's gonna overflow. You will be in a leadership position and you will be able to lead out in various ways because that's what happens when God blesses you. God set him up. He got him in a difficult situation and God allowed that situation to work out for his good.

So here's the punch line. If you don't take anything, take this one text for today. "From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the Lord blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field." - Genesis 39:5

God blessed the Egyptian not because of the Egyptian. He blessed the Egyptian because of Joseph. He blessed the Egyptian because of Joseph's faithfulness. God will bless your family because of your faithfulness. That God will bless your community because of your faithfulness. God will bless your surroundings because of you. So stop worrying about what

everybody else is doing. Just be faithful. God will prosper you. And when you prosper, God will use you to be a channel of blessing to the people around you.

(World population-Australian population-Bundaberg population)- Can you imagine if we have a church of people that are faithful and blessing each other in behalf of God? You know how powerful we would be in this community? I would love to hear people to say that Bundaberg is blessed because of Hinkler Seventh-day Adventist Church. That should be our desire. I want people to say that, 'you know what? When I came in a room with somebody that when I left they were better off forth. Don't you want people to meet you and get to know you and when you're done, they feel good about that.

God blessed the household of the Egyptian because of the faithfulness of Joseph. Are you being faithful to God? Or maybe you and your family are not being blessed because you're not being faithful? The scripture tells us that God will bless other people because of our faithfulness. Now I want to share with you a concept. We have this concept called, 'Intercessory Prayer.' You know that concept that God will bless somebody on the behalf of your prayers. You pray for somebody and God will intervene in that somebody's life because of your prayers.

Intercessory Prayer:

Pastor Folkenberg used to tell this story at an evangelism conference. He tells about a woman who didn't have much to offer and so she decided to take 15 random names out of a phone book and started praying for them. Day in day out she prayed for them. Several months later there was an evangelistic series in her town. And at the end of the series 15 people were baptised and as this people went up she started recognising the names and 9 out of the 15 names were the names that she had prayed for. That's 'Intercessory Prayer.'

I would like to suggest to you this. Something called 'Intercessory Blessing.'

Genesis 12:2 says, "I will bless you so you will be a blessing." *

Do you think God can pour out blessings on somebody else's life because of your faithfulness? YES! Maybe God is looking for us to be a blessing to somebody else. That's how it works. We're a family, we're together, we help each other out so that I get blessed and I can be a blessing to you. And you can become a blessing to somebody else. And if we do that folks, all this people in church we will be a powerful force for God. God says hey, 'I will bless you, I want to bless you, I want to give you many blessings so will be in a position to be a blessing to somebody else. "Intercessory Blessing."

Are you a blessing for God today? Well some of you may think, 'Well I don't know.' It sound a little far fetch. So lets go to some bible support of this. *Genesis 26:4-5 - I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."

Isaac was getting blessed because of Abraham's faithfulness. Fathers, your family will be blessed because of your faithfulness. You want to give a legacy to your kids, be faithful. God's gonna bless your kids as the Bible says from generation to generation. Bible says it. He will bless your children and He will bless your offspring because of your faithfulness. That's "Intercessory Blessings."

Remember the story of Nebuchadnezzar? He had a dream and couldn't be interpreted. What did he say to all his magicians? You will all die today. Daniel comes along and answers the

dream. What happens to them? They are saved because of Daniel. God will bless you and all those around you because of your faithfulness.

Paul, on his journey to Rome he was on a boat and the boat was going down and everybody was gonna die. The Bible says, *”And said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.’ - Acts 27:24

Talk about good company. Talk about being careful who you hang out with. You hang out with the right people you may get saved. Talk about the importance of positioning yourself for success. Talk about the importance of being involved with the right people that’s gonna be a blessing to your life rather than a draw in your life. Talk about the importance of friendship groups. We would like to pick on young people for this but adults is the same way. Be careful who you hang out with. They can cost you your life. *”I will bless you so you will be a blessing.” - Genesis 12:2. Have you been a blessing to someone this week? Is there an opportunity for you to be a blessing to someone this coming week? Can’t you stop thinking about yourself and pray a prayer that ‘Lord, help me to be a blessing to someone this week.

“Therefore as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people especially those who belong to the family of believers.”

*”That’s why whenever we can we should always be kind to everyone, and especially to our Christian brothers.” Galatians 6:10 - The Living Bible

We can also be an example in the way we react when things don’t go our way. People are watching. When things sometimes aren’t good and we have bad things in our life, people watch how we will react.

*”Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsels of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.” - Psalms 1:1-3

*”Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the Lord your God and you will be upheld: have faith in His prophets and you will be successful.” - 2 Chronicles 20:20

*”I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others.” - Genesis 12:2

APOLOGY OF ARISTIDES

Have you been a blessing to anyone this week? Do we just come to church fill ourselves up and stay for a good long day and then were off? Filled until next week. It’s so easy to become complaisant. If we honour the Lord in all we do by operating our household companies in a way that is based on Biblical principles, God is going to prosper us, God will prosper your home, God will prosper your work, God will prosper our community because of our faithfulness to His calling. God promises, *”I will bless you so you will be a blessing.” - Genesis 12:2.