

DANGEROUS PRAYERS 6: 'Lord, bless me'

Praying blessing is entirely BIBLICAL & often ENCOURAGED (2 Chron 4:10, Num 6:22-26, Prov 10:22).

→ *Where and how does blessing fit in the Bible? Think of Abraham, Jabez, the priests, Psalms, Jesus, Paul.*

→ *How often do the words bless or blessing appear in your prayers? How do you use them? What do they mean?*

→ *What does it mean to say that everyone, whether outwardly or subconsciously, longs to be blessed by God?*

When we ask God to BLESS US, what EXACTLY are we asking for?

* It's obviously not a SHALLOW, SELFISH prayer → God never encourages prayers like that.

* There's clearly a DEPTH, PURPOSE & POWER behind it.

→ *How might 'Lord, bless me' be a shallow or selfish prayers? Is there a danger that we tend to think of blessing in materialistic or worldly ways? What does the idea of 'favour' mean to you?*

3 ELEMENTS that lie just beneath the surface of this prayer

1. 'Lord, please bring the PROMISES of heaven into FULNESS & REALITY in my life'

* Eph 1:3 → We're ALREADY blessed, with EVERY spiritual blessing in Christ.

* We don't ask God to bless us because we are UN-BLESSED.

* We're really asking, 'May they BURST into LIFE ... Increase in POWER & INFLUENCE ... Move from THEORY to REALITY ... Be effective in my life in eradicating CURSES, disqualifying LIES & healing HURTS.'

→ *How do things change if, in the light of Ephesians 1:3-7, we are already blessed, with every spiritual blessing? Are we seeking things we already possess? How do those things move from theory to reality, in they really are our identity and inheritance in Christ?*

→ *The list in Deut 28 is awe-inspiring. Our covenant is greater; our promises are better. What would a NT or 2020 version of Deut 28 look like?*

i) As believers we have the UNDENIABLE, UNBREAKABLE PROMISES of God (Eph 1:3, Heb 13:5, Phil 4:13,19, Rom 8:31,35,37).

ii) This world in in a FALLEN state.

iii) Those two REALMS are at WAR.

A huge part of our SPIRITUAL BATTLE is learning how to live in the BLESSING rather than the CURSE.

→ *What is that spiritual battle? How does it work? In order to live in blessing rather than curse, what choices do we need to make?*

2. Asking the Lord to TRANSFORM you from a TAKER into a GIVER.

* Worldly thinking is, the more I HAVE the more blessed I'll FEEL.

* Jesus turned that upside-down by teaching, '*It's more blessed to GIVE than to RECEIVE*' (Acts 20:35).

* One of the key signs of spiritual maturity is not that I go into a room looking to GET BLESSED but rather wherever possible to BE A BLESSING.

* Remarkable thing Jesus knew the Pharisees didn't = GIVING rather than TAKING is the TRUE SOURCE of REAL, MEANINGFUL, LASTING blessing.

* TRUE blessing is found in PARTNERING with the Holy Spirit ... Experiencing His PRESENCE & POWER coursing through your veins When the Holy Spirit ENERGISES you to serve & glorify Jesus ... Then blessing COMES ALIVE.

→ *How do we tend to try to GET blessing? What are the dangers if we do? How might we consume blessing rather than spread it or compete for blessing rather than share it? Why is this such a good indicator of spiritual maturity?*

→ *How does this definition of spiritual maturity resonate? How does it challenge or indeed interconnect with other definitions or characteristics of maturity you might have in your mind?*

→ *"This is where OT religious Judaism had lost the plot. They failed to recognise blessing was not to be collected, competed for or consumed, but lavishly spread for the glory of God. The Pharisees practically redefined blessing to suit their purposes." How had they redefined it? What did they think blessing looked like? Where did they think it came from? Why did they think it was exclusively theirs? How did this mindset destroy their witness and mission? How did Jesus go about dismantling their selfish thinking?*

→ *"True blessing is found in partnering with the Holy Spirit." Discuss!*

3. Choosing to LAY DOWN the blessing of THIS WORLD in pursuit of the TRUE blessing of HEAVEN.

* DANGER is: You INADVERTENTLY go RUNNING from the blessing looking for worldly SUBSTITUTES / COUNTERFEITS (Matthew 5:3-12).

* The place of TRUE blessing is in DENYING self, LAYING DOWN your life & FOLLOWING Jesus (Luke 9:23).

* When we step into the realm of the Beatitudes, our understanding of 'blessed' gets STRETCHED, ENLARGED, DEEPENED ... It's a DANGEROUS place, but it's where the true ANSWER to the question is to be found.

→ *Why & how are those Beatitudes places of blessing? How do they contradict worldly thinking? How do they contradict your 'safe, Christian' thinking?*

→ *"The danger is, you inadvertently go running from the blessing, looking for wrong thing ... for worldly substitutes/counterfeits." What are those substitutes & counterfeits. Why are they dangerous? Why are they attractive? For each substitute / counterfeit, what is the godly alternative, the real thing?*

→ *What, then, is the 'right thing?' In a couple of sentences, how would you describe the place of true spiritual blessing?*