

Building on Blessings Genesis 24:7-17

What needs to happen that seems to you to be impossible? National revival? Statewide revival? City-wide revival? Church-wide revival? What God-honoring goal do you have in mind to achieve some glorious end? Is it the salvation of a loved-one? Perhaps it is the humble return of a rebellious child? Could it be a financial fiasco, and you just don't see a way out? Does the task you have in mind look overwhelming? Would others say to you, "Give up!" "There's no way that will happen!"? Yet you believe that the Lord would be pleased for you to take on this challenge. But others say it can't be done. This reminds us of the lines from Edgar Allan Guest:

"Somebody scoffed: "Oh, you'll never do that; / At least no one ever has done it;" / But he took off his coat and he took off his hat / And the first thing we knew he'd begun it. / With a lift of his chin and a bit of a grin, / Without any doubting or quiddit, / He started to sing as he tackled the thing / That couldn't be done, and he did it. / There are thousands to tell you it cannot be done, / There are thousands to prophesy failure, / There are thousands to point out to you one by one, / The dangers that wait to assail you. / But just buckle in with a bit of a grin, / Just take off your coat and go to it; / Just start in to sing as you tackle the thing / That "cannot be done," and you'll do it."

God's Remarkable Providence

If we were to treat Genesis 24 casually, we might just admire the servant's persistence. But if we look deeper, we see that God Himself is the main character in this story. Yes, we see the servant's persistence, but God's amazing Providence is on display in this chapter. Beginning with the very first verse, Genesis 24 is brimming over with blessings: ". . . **the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things.**" In the last message, we learned that the Lord God had promised Abraham that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through his seed – his descendantⁱⁱ. In today's message, we want to learn how to build on those blessings.

But the first question that we must ask is this: *Are these our blessings to build on?* To answer that question, turn to Galatians 3. Here we find an explanation in the apostle's doctrine. We believe that the Lord worked mightily through His apostles, inspiring His Word. The result is that the Holy Spirit infallibly interprets the Scripture through the Scripture. So note what Galatians 3:14 tells us about the blessing promised to Abraham. **"That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."** This brings us right into the moment, doesn't it? Those who have placed all their faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ know the blessing of Abraham! When Jesus died for our sins on that Roman cross, and was buried and rose again – He fulfilled God's promise! God had provided the Lamb who would take away the sins of the world.ⁱⁱⁱ Now, those who truly know Christ have the promised Spirit of God bearing witness within them. Peter referred to this blessing in Acts 3:25-26 when he preached to lost people that the Father sent His Son **"to bless you in turning every one of you from his iniquities!"** So to answer the question posed by the title of this message: *Yes! These are our blessings to build on!*

In the last message, we launched into this adventure in Genesis 24. Abraham made a formal appeal to his servant to find a wife for his son, Isaac. The servant is not named in Genesis 24, but Abraham had a servant named Eliezer, who was from Damascus. According to Genesis 15:2-3, if Abraham had had no son, Eliezer would have been Abraham's heir. If the servant in Genesis 24 was Eliezer, the story is even more

remarkable; he would have served faithfully, even though it did not appear to be in his best interest. When we left off, Abraham was explaining the task to his servant:

⁷ The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence. ⁸ And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again. ⁹ And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning that matter.

Abraham explained the task to his servant by describing the Person of God, the providence and promises of God and the practical task. Thinking this way (Who God is, Why we do things, and What to do) can help us communicate the task to the coming generation. The servant came to understand that his mission was only a part of his master's larger mission. He responded well to reproof and responded with a heart full of grace. He was called upon to make a difficult commitment and he made it. You will also be called upon to make such commitments. How will you do this? This story of Abraham and his servant helps the next generation see God's glory. As Moses would later pray (Psalm 90:16), **"Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children."** God worked mightily through the faithful commitment of Abraham's servant. At the end of Genesis 24, when he returned to give his report, all who heard it could give glory to the Lord God of heaven.

The Servant's Prayerful Persistence

The Servant's Planning

¹⁰ And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor.^{iv} ¹¹ And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water.

This servant/leader^v recognized that he was a servant and a leader. He did not wait until he was forced, or until Abraham told him what to do next. Once he clearly understood that limits of his task, he demonstrated that he was a man of action. And by making a difficult commitment, this servant would learn so much about God's providential care and compassion. In the last message, we learned that this man anticipated problems and communicated his recommended solutions to Abraham. Now he does this in prayer. In verses 10-12, we can see these characteristics on full display. It's clear that he plans his work and works his plan, always trusting in God's ultimate providence. He left the area of Hebron to travel 600-700 miles north, either through Damascus or along a route closer to the coast. He traveled to the city of Nahor (later known as Haran). Knowing that young ladies would be walking to the well in the town at evening time, the servant wanted to be in the right place at the right time. This servant/leader had developed a keen sense of timing, and he knew how to use it. As we shall see, this servant also knew how to look for a young lady who knew how to serve. Now before we move on from this section, let's be practical. It is right to be businesslike. It honors God to make careful plans. It's important to be in the right place at the right time. But planning doesn't rule out praying; if anything it leads to more focused praying.

The Servant's Prayerful Recommendations to the Lord

That this servant/leader knew how to talk to the Lord is evident from the first words of verse 12:

¹² And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. ¹³ Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters

of the men of the city come out to draw water: ¹⁴ And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: *let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.*

This is what it looks like when a trustworthy servant takes on a daunting task: he works hard and prays fervently. The servant prayed to the Lord God of heaven – the God of his master Abraham. This man knew that his master Abraham had a personal relationship with God. So he also boldly made a personal entrance into God’s presence. (Hebrews 4:16 appeals to believers to enter the throne room of grace boldly.) Here you can see that the servant had truly grasped *Who* God is and he knew how to use that knowledge: he prayed. He was practically applying the theology that his master had taught him (Genesis 24:7). He did so by making prayerful recommendations that would help him carry through on his task:

- Send me good success today
- Let it come to pass . . .
- Let her be the one whom You have appointed
- By this shall I know Your steadfast love for my master

You could pray like this! As you make God-honoring “prayer recommendations” pray, “Lord send me good success today!” And “let it come to pass . . .” A prayer assumes that God has appointed! We could make practical recommendations based on what we know about our God. We make recommendations according to His Word. And He may be pleased to answer our requests quickly. As we pray, we will have greater assurance of God’s steadfast, loyal love.^{vi} We should not be troubled by supposed problems between God’s sovereign providence and a servant’s humble prayer. Both are in the Bible: God’s sovereignty and man’s supplication. Let’s be honest: prayer assumes that God is sovereign. This man was not a passive fatalist; he was faithful prayer warrior.

God’s Remarkable Provision in Answer to the Servant’s Prayer

¹⁵ And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham’s brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. ¹⁶ And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up. ¹⁷ And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher.

The servant’s request was “interrupted” by the Lord’s answer! Now some might say: “That’s not the way it really is.” But consider the prayers of George Mueller. From the writings of Charles Dickens, we know about the impoverished orphans in 19th century. But there was a man of prayer in Bristol, England who did something about those conditions; George Mueller planned and prayed. And the results? *“Mueller had over fifty thousand specific recorded answers to prayers in his journals, thirty thousand of which he said were answered the same day or the same hour that he prayed them. Think of it: that’s five hundred definite answers to prayer each year—more than one per day—every single day for sixty years! God funneled over half a billion dollars (in today’s dollars) through his hands in answer to prayer.”^{vii}* As you read this, ask this question: *Why haven’t I seen remarkable answers to prayer in my life, in my loved ones, in my church, in my country?* The answer from James 4:2-3 is that you have not because you ask not; or you ask for something that will only gratify your evil desires. Isn’t it time that we took on some difficult challenges in prayer that may seem impossible? When we gather in our Family Fellowship Groups on Sunday, August 11, wouldn’t it be great to joyously testify about God’s

answers to your specific prayers? Let's begin with that end in mind. Let's aim to glorify God by giving "B.D.I.D" ("Before Day Is Done") answers. Some may be so sensitive that you can't share the details, but you can share that God answers prayer! This week and next week, we will study this servant's prayer and praise to God. Our missionary will be speaking on August 11, and then our fellowship groups will meet in the afternoon and evening. Why not determine right now that you are going to enter the throne room of grace with specific requests? And then encourage others with the answers you receive. You too will learn what it means to be "building on blessings!"

God of Our Fathers and Lord of Salvation (based on Acts 3)

Great God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

You gave the promise of Abraham's Seed

Promising blessing for all of the nations

Blessing poor sinners in our greatest need

God of our fathers, You gave us this blessing,

Glorified Jesus, Your Servant and Son

Blessing us, turning us from our transgressions

Blessed us in sending us Your Holy One

All of the prophets of old have proclaimed Him

All we like sheep turned away and He bled

He is the blessing for all of the nations

Jesus, the Christ, whom God raised from the dead

Though we rejected His Son sent to save us

Putting to death the dear Author of life

We must repent and be cleansed by His promise

He grants us power over death to arise

Now in His presence we know great refreshing

Faith in His name brought us forth from the dead

Now we are watching for His greatest blessing

He will return to us as He has said.

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ⁱ Edgar Alan Guest, "It Couldn't Be Done" <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44314/it-couldnt-be-done>

ⁱⁱ Galatians 3:8 goes so far as to say that God preached the Gospel to Abraham – that He would justify sinners who placed faith in Him. See Genesis 22:17-18. Note how this blessing was passed along in Genesis 28:1-4, 12-15

ⁱⁱⁱ John 1:29

^{iv} According to Genesis 11:27-32, Abram's family (including his brother, Nahor) had left Ur and traveled to Haran. Archeologists are uncertain as to whether "Ur" referred to the city or the region. "The northern Ur view also argues that the way in which Genesis refers to the land of Abram and of his birth implies that the area around Haran, but not southern Mesopotamia, was included (Gordon, "Abraham," 31; Gen 24:4-7). T. Michael Kennedy, "Ur," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016)."

^v The servant who ruled over all that Abraham owned, Genesis 24:1-2

^{vi} Look at the way this is fleshed out in answered prayer in 1 John 3:19-22.

^{vii} Donald Whitney, "What George Mueller Can Teach Us About Prayer," July 27, 2015, accessed at crossway.org/articles/what-george-mueller-can-teach-us-about-prayer/