

Blessed of the Lord

Genesis 24:28-33

How can you turn your problems into projects? Is that really possible? Can your obstacles really be transformed into opportunities? Or is that just some sort of “positive thinking” doubletalk? No, according to the Scriptures, we can overcome our hurdles with help from heaven. Let’s find out how this can be possible.

In the story in Genesis 24, we have identified the main character: the Lord. It is God’s promise and God’s providence that set this story in motion. We have beheld how the God of heaven works through godly human beings. The promise was made to Abraham, but it is another character who takes the center stage: Abraham’s servant. We have watched him take hold of God’s promises with a God-honoring persistence. He wins the day by knowing the ways of the All-wise God. In the last message, we studied how frustrating the feeling of “hurry up and wait” can be. But we noticed that, though the servant ran to meet the woman for whom he had prayed, he waited for the Lord to answer. Thus, the frustration of “hurry up and wait” is transformed to the faithful response, “hurry up and wait on the Lord.” Most important of all, we noticed how Abraham’s servant, the leader of the caravan, praised God for answered prayer; he did not think that prayer and praise to God was a waste of time.

If you want to turn your problems into projects, you must learn to pray earnestly and watch for God’s answers eagerly. If you do the first without the second, you treat the infinite God like a grinning idol. Don’t treat the infinite, living God like a little grinning idol; make careful notes of His answers to prayer. You need to start a prayer journal in order to pay close attention to God’s answers.

Drawing on the Blessings of God’s Providence

Long before Abraham’s servant knelt by the well in Haran, he was drawing from another well. He knew that God had blessed Abraham in all things (Genesis 24:1). Undoubtedly, the servant knew that God’s blessing extended well beyond his master. In Genesis 26:4, the Lord reiterated to Isaac the promise He had made to Abraham: “. . . and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;” So all the way from the first descendant of Abraham in Genesis 26 to his later descendants in Acts 3:25, God’s promise of blessing was still in effect. So the servant chose to dip into the well of God’s promise, and God rewarded him with blessings by the bucketful. For us, this story in Genesis 24 is essential equipment for life. We need those blessings by the bucketful. And you and I can draw from the well of God’s blessed provision, just like that servant did. In fact, these promised blessings of God are the basis for the way we face every new challenge. How do we go about getting these blessings by the bucketful?

Drawing on God’s Blessings with Persistence

Let’s begin with an end in mind. Note the words in verse 31 of today’s text: “Come in, you blessed of the Lord!”

²⁸ And the damsel ran, and told *them* of her mother’s house these things. ²⁹ And Rebekah had a brother, and his name *was* Laban: and Laban ran out unto the man, unto the well. ³⁰ And it came to pass, when he saw the earring and bracelets upon his sister’s hands, and when he heard the words

of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spake the man unto me; that he came unto the man; and, behold, he stood by the camels at the well. ³¹ And he said, Come in, thou blessed of the LORD; wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels. ³² And the man came into the house: and he ungirded his camels, and gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the men's feet that *were* with him. ³³ And there was set *meat* before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat, until I have told mine errand. And he said, Speak on.

Now remember, this is Laban talking. Laban will later prove to be a shrewd, double-dealing manipulator. He will deceive Jacob by marrying him to the wrong woman. He will show himself to be conniving and controlling by changing Jacob's wages. As Genesis proceeds, it will reveal that he is a real con man. So the man understands how to use people for his own ends. But what does Laban say to this humble, prayerful servant? **"Come in you blessed of the Lord!"** He did not say, "Come in your very shrewd dude." If you want to turn your problems into projects, you must learn to pray earnestly and watch for God's answers eagerly. He didn't demand that the servant use the back door or make his lodging in the barn. He invited him right into his home. Laban, Rebekah and (her future son) Jacob will all become manipulators. They will pressure people for their own purposes. But Abraham's humble servant is a motivator. He knows how to pray for people and zealously persist to accomplish God's purposes. Which kind of person do you intend to become: a manipulator or a motivator? Do you intend to pressure people or pray for people? Every one of us would love to succeed in our missions and hear the words, **"Come in you blessed of the Lord!"** So let's review the story to this point to see this servant/leader's characteristics that led to this announcement. Note his persistence which flows out of a good understanding of God's providence. This man was fervent and faithful; he was no fatalist.

Characteristics of Servant/Leadership in Genesis 24

1. The effective servant/leader will carefully consider the promised blessings of God as the basis for every new challenge. 1
2. The servant/leader must recognize that he is both a servant and a leader. 2
3. All servant/leaders know that they must make difficult commitments. They will be called upon to diligently apply themselves to the concerns of those who have given them a responsibility. This will often involve things they have never done before. 2-4
4. Good leaders anticipate problems and make recommendations in advance about how to solve those problems. 5
5. The servant/leader will maintain a teachable spirit, even when his recommendations are rejected; he responds well to reproof. 6-9
6. The servant/leader recognizes that his mission is only a part of his master's larger mission. 6-8
7. The servant/leader learns to make practical choices based on the fact that the Lord God of heaven fulfills His promises through His providential work. 7-8
8. The servant/leader makes plans and prepares himself for his mission. 10
9. The servant/leader develops a keen sense of timing (and uses it). 11
10. He knows how to pray: He can talk to the Lord, drawing on His promised blessings. 12-16
11. A godly leader will follow his prayer with eager persistence, applying all of his energies to fulfilling his mission. 17

12. The servant/leader uses God-given discernment to evaluate the service and spirit of others. 18-21
13. The servant/leader is willing to wait for God's answers to his prayers with eager expectation. 21
14. The servant/leader knows God well enough to recognize His providential work. 21-22
15. The servant/leader will use gifts from his master for his master's benefit. 22
16. The servant/leader acquires all the information necessary to complete his mission. 23-25
17. The servant/leader makes sure that God receives all the glory for his success, because he knows that is true. 26-31

As we can see, this story helps us to see a wonderful weaving together of God-honoring prayer and God-honoring persistence. When Rebekah ran to tell her family, she included the final important detail: that man knelt down right there by the well and praised the Living God! The Bible doesn't teach, "God helps those that help themselves." It does teach that prayerful people persist in practical ways as they praise God's providence. It's no wonder that it made such an impact on Laban. He was eager to say, **"Come in you blessed of the Lord!"** This is the same thing that Potiphar noticed about Joseph in Genesis 39:1-4. He noticed that God was with Joseph and everything he did prospered in his hand. (See Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1.) Before we walk away from this part of the story, let's consider two more characteristics of this servant in this text.

18. The servant/leader is genuinely concerned about his followers and gives careful consideration to their needs. 32

To assure his ultimate success, Abraham's servant supervised even the little things: getting the saddles off of the camels and caring for the needs of his men. The fact that these are part of the record tells us something about this man's eye for detail.

19. The servant/leader considers his mission more important than creature comforts. 33

We have learned that this man knew how to pray instead of pressuring people. He was a motivator, not a manipulator. Yet when he sits down to the meal, he doesn't even want to eat until he explains his mission. Instead of looking for "creature comforts," this man wholeheartedly pursued his purpose. He demonstrated a God-honoring work ethic, and asked for permission to speak. And the answer from Laban was, "Speak on." This prayerful man turned obstacles into opportunities. He overcame his hurdles with help from heaven.

What does all this have to do with us today? According to Galatians 3:16, the Seed of Abraham is Jesus Christ. The blessing of the seed promised to Abraham is still part of our God-honoring work ethic today; we serve the Christ, the promised seed. Consider the words of Colossians 3:22-24 to see how employees should respond to their employers in a God-honoring manner because we serve the Lord Christ:

²² Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: ²³ And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; ²⁴ Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

Are you sick and tired of an empty, boring life? Has your pursuit of evil left you empty? Then we would like to invite you to the greatest adventure you have ever known: serving Jesus Christ. He served you by dying on the cross for your evil desires and evil deeds. He was buried, just like your body may be buried someday. But He rose again victorious over death to deliver you from death and coming judgment. In the fear of God, repent today and receive God's free gift of salvation. Then, let the adventure begin!

Our prayers should be persistent: In Ephesians 6:18, Paul wrote, **"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;"** If we want those blessings by the bucketful, we will need to learn how to persevere in prayer. This is the key to God-honoring, persistent leadership.

If we truly know that we are brimming over with the blessings of Abraham, we can turn our problems into projects. By God's grace, we can transform obstacles into opportunities. Difficulties will turn us to delight in God. With each new hurdle, we will look to the heavens from whence comes our help.

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ⁱ In "The Return of Prayers," (a treatise emphasizing the importance of eagerly watching for answers to prayer) Thomas Goodwin gave excellent reasons why we should eagerly look for answers to prayer:

- a. To do otherwise is to take God's name in vain. If " you take an ordinance of God in vain in your hearts, which is to take God's name . . . it is a sign you think prayer is not an effective means to attain an end that is ordained" citing Job 21:15! "For it is a sign you think of that God you pray to, that either 'his ear is heavy, that he cannot hear, or his hand shortened that he cannot save . . ."
- b. To do otherwise is to ask God speak to you in vain: when you do not listen to what He answers. 1 Kings 8:56
- c. If you fail to do this, you will provoke the Lord not to answer your prayer at all; He will forbear to answer, because He sees it will be thus in vain. Ezekiel 14:1-4
- d. If you do not eagerly look for answers to prayer, how will you bless God and return thanks to Him for hearing your prayers? Psalm 116:1, Colossians 4:2
- e. To look for ways to give glory to God: to experience God and His faithfulness, Psalm 116:2
- f. If you do not, you will lose much of your comfort. There is no greater joy than to see your prayers answered, or to see souls converted by us. John 16:24

Thomas Goodwin, The Return of Prayer, chapter 1, accessed at

<https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/goodwin/The%20Return%20of%20Prayers%20-%20Thomas%20Goodwin.pdf>