

Spirit-Filled Pastor: Is Your Blessing Waiting on You?

“There is a sense in which God’s promises are unconditional, in that our disobedience will not thwart God’s intention to be gracious, but there is also a sense in which those promises will be released only through the obedience of God’s people.”
—Paul Carter

The Bible is clear that God blesses His people. But it’s also clear that some blessings have conditions: “If you do this, I will do that.” Sadly, many motivational preachers, teachers and pastors only focus on the blessings of God without showing the other side of the coin. “I have to keep my members happy and encouraged,” they say.

Yes, we should encourage, but we also must convict and confront if we are to be faithful ministers of the gospel.

Many come to church praising God but not prevailing with Him, worshipping but not walking in His promises and praying but not seeing His power because of unrepentant sin: “Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that he will not hear” (Isa. 59:2). As it’s been said, “It is possible to have a saved soul but a lost life.”

We actually do a disservice to people if we fail to preach on the wonderful truth of repentance. I believe God will heal our land *if* we repent and turn to Him. I believe He will supply every need for those who, from a pure heart, honor Him with their resources. I believe God will bless you with a ministry *if* you are obedient in the small things. I believe God can honor a person with a spouse *if* they stop partying and seek His will rather than their own.

And on and on it goes—where it stops only God knows.

Sin Fascinates Before It Assassinates

Scriptural truths must be balanced, but what does it mean to be balanced? When we speak of the attributes of God, we must remember that no one attribute is greater than another and no single truth of Scripture is truer than another.

To genuinely help people, we must avoid the temptation to cherry-pick. We must preach the difficult truths as well as the joyful ones—the cross and the new life, hell and heaven, damnation and salvation, sin and grace, wrath and love, judgment and mercy, and obedience and forgiveness.

We must preach that God is love but not forget He is also just. It is the love of God that compels us to share all His truth.

Jeremiah 5:25 is powerful and heart-wrenching: “Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withheld good things from you.” He goes on to say in verses 30 and 31: “An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own authority; and My people love to have it so. Yet what will you do in the end?” False teachers are often a judgment on false converts and on those who love to have their ears tickled but not their hearts changed. (Here is one sure sign of a false prophet.)

When people follow their own plans, they walk backward and not forward. Disobeying God is a recurring theme from Genesis to Revelation and from the church in Acts to the church today. We must be relentless in our pursuit of God, ruthless in rooting out and dealing with our own sin and quick to repent and seek the restoration of our fellowship with God when we fail.

The lukewarm church hates conviction. They “say” that they fear God, but they don’t live like it. They indulge temptation rather than fight it. They enjoy sin rather than confront it. I call this group Las Vegas Christians—they have the

appearance of glitter and beauty in the dark of night, but the bright light of the sun shows the dirty facade. They mock those who seek holiness and chide those who want to truly live for God.

God's Word is clear: Blessings are hindered because of a sinful lifestyle. Whether it's wine tasting at Bible studies, promoting craft beers at men's conferences or an array of other missteps, the Las Vegas Christian is only concerned with pleasure and ease. They "sit down to eat and drink, and rise up to play." *Sin fascinates before it assassinates!*

Disobedience Hinders Blessings

Indulging the flesh is always linked with disobedience, and disobedience does not produce blessings. But be encouraged—there is a way out, a way back to God—and that way out is *repentance*. To hit disobedience right between the eyes, we must "go back to the old paths"—the old paths of holiness and deep hunger for righteousness. This forward motion leads to the filling of the Spirit. You can't be filled with disobedience and the Spirit at the same time.

But even when we are obeying and being blessed, there is always a fight. A.W. Pink, in *Gleanings from Joshua*, said: "It would indeed be strange if we apprehended how that on the one hand Canaan was a free gift unto Israel, which they entered by grace alone; and on the other, that they had to fight for every inch of it!" Blessings come with a cost; there is often a price to pay.

Yes, God bestows prevenient grace on all, and He will bless people sometimes despite their actions. And it is true that "He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45), but these are temporary, earthly blessings that pale in comparison to what He has in store for those who seek Him.

The resounding promises of Scripture are clear: He blesses

those who follow Him, He fills those who seek Him and He delivers those who cry out: "But You, O Lord, are a shield for me, my glory and the One who raises up my head. I cried to the Lord with my voice, and He answered me from His holy hill" (Ps. 3:3-4).

Remind yourself of who God is and cry out to Him today. His heart is toward reconciliation, and His will is to bless His children. If you need weekly encouragement, follow me on Facebook and YouTube, and find sermons here. {eoa}

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