

Blessed by God Most High ▪ Genesis 14:1–24

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As an outsider to the South, there are still many things to learn. One thing I can't wrap my head around is the phrase: "Bless your heart".

I figured Southern Living magazine would be an authoritative source; so I found an article:

How to Respond to Bless Your Heart.

What I learned is that it all depends on tone.

—If it's whispered: "Can you believe it?"

—Empathy: "I'm so sorry"

—Sassy: "What were you thinking?"

—Pity: "You didn't know any better"

—Neutral: "I'd rather not say what I'm thinking"

- If a phrase has that many meanings, does it really have a meaning? If it can mean everything, it really means nothing.
- Now we do not find "Bless you heart" in the Bible —but we do find blessing, and a lot of it. Especially in Genesis.
- The word *bless* occurs 76 times in Gen. About 1/6 of the blessings in scripture are found in Gen.

"When God blesses, it is not an impotent wish but the empowering and transforming word that accomplishes its purposes." (Mounces Expository Dictionary)

› *It's not a flimsy and fluffy blessing, but a firm and fixed Word that comes from God.*

**When there is blessing, you can count on their being favor and fulfillment of a promise.

- Gen. 14 is built on blessing.
- Actually, the entire call of Abram's life, his entire faith, is built on the blessing of God.
- This story is the development of Gen. 12:3a.

Central Idea of Text:

Genesis 14: What it looks like to be blessed by God Most High

Blessed in pursuits (1-16)

Blessed in possessions (17, 21-24)

Blessed by God and a Great Priest (18-20)

- Blessing is a huge theme in the Bible

From the first chapter in Gen., to the final in Rev., you find God's blessing.

This concept of blessing applies now to our lives. It's important to know what the Bible says about real blessing that God showers on real lives.

How do you know that you are blessed?

(Listen to some bad preaching and they will tell you wrong things; incorrect ways to measure: health and wealth)

I don't think it's an overstatement for me to say that living under God's blessing is the most important factor in our lives.

So what does it look like? Let's take a look at Gen. 14.

Blessed in pursuits (1-16)

- The blessings of God: either we hear them pronounced, or played out in Providence.

Details:

- This battle was fought around 2085 BC in the Valley of Siddim—just south of the Dead Sea.
- What triggered it was 4 kings who did not want to pay tribute to their overlords after 12 years, so they rebelled.
- I call this story: The battle of 10 kings. (You may think it's a math issue on my end).

Where is number 10? Abraham?

“In this account Abram acted as a king defending the land by intervening on behalf of its oppressed subjects. There was *blessing* in being associated with Abram and there was *curse* when one dishonored Abram or those related to him.” (Richard Belcher, Jr)

- Yet there is something else: These kings are in a battle for one reason: Lordship of the Land.
- › *Yet there is one true Lord of that Land: GOD Most High!* Abram's victory shows who is True King.
- The outcome of the initial warfare: Lot is taken captive (11-12)

Now I'm not sure how you imagine Abraham: I've imagined him as an older man, grey beard. Wise—like Gandalf smoking a pipe.

But the picture we get here: Abraham is seen as a forceful military leader:

—318 trained men will be part of this stealth operation.

—Not an easy trek: 120 miles of travel to the northernmost border of Canaan.

- This really seems like Special Forces stuff: the military is divided in half and attacks in the middle of night....all to rescue one man and his family.

Yet what stands behind it all: not Abram's military genius, nor even the size of his military—but *God's blessing*.

For God's people of faith, God's blessing does follow them into their pursuits....when they are pursuits done faithfully and according to his will. (Prov. 28:20)

Proverbs 28:20 (ESV)

A faithful man will abound with blessings,

James 1:25 ESV

But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

Blessed with possessions (17, 21-14)

- In v17 there is a shift in the narrative: Battle is over.
- Abram is met by the King of Sodom and offered spoils of war ..which Abram refuses...staunchly refuses.
- In case you did not see this as a strong act of faith...it is.
- It's really a God-centered refusal, built on faith.
- For Abraham to take the King's offer would likely be entering into a Vassal covenant treaty.

But his faith moves him to say: NO

- Abraham has one covenant with the Lord of the LAND—Yahweh God.

Plus,

Abram know that all the good things in life....come ultimately from God—not man

This helps us to see the hand behind all that we have.

This God-centered perspective of possessions finds its way into the NT teaching.....even for those like Abram who have much.

1 Timothy 6:17 ESV

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

- Yet there is another way to apply this: by asking if we are willing to wait. Are we willing to wait for the blessing that is from God.

We are usually in such a rush.

I know I can be.

I can give you an example from my life.

After I graduated from CIU I was offered a staff ministry position working with junior high students at a large church, very close to family.

I was in a hurry to get started.

Yet someone counseled me to meet with the TRB elders before making a big life decision:

They asked probing questions that helped.

Long and short....I didn't go. The main reason: faith was not driving my decision. It was more practical. It was a job I could get in immediately.

The decision to wait: meant 5 hard years working on another degree, living in small cramped apartments; working multiple odd jobs.

Yet I know God's blessing was in it.

You might have a story or two as well.

We need to be willing to **wait** to see God's blessing unfold and *not rush* into something that just appears good in the moment...but may not be the decision that is driven by faith.

Blessed by God's Priest (18-20)

- For this section to make sense: we need to see the deep contrast between the King of Sodom and Melchizedek.
- King of Sodom: He rules a city that is so wicked that God destroys it.
- Melchizedek on the other hand, his name means "Righteous King" and rules over the city (Salem)—you know by another name: Jerusalem.
- Also, King of Salem offers physical gifts—yet ironically the first word is "give me".

- Melchizedek: Comes with rich Blessing—that focuses on the Giver, God Most High, El Elyon means “Possessor/Creator of heaven and earth”.
- › *Melchizedek draws our focus to God’s Sovereign Lordship over all creation and all nations.*

I think this is also helpful as we enter a thick political season. Regardless of who ends up in the Oval Office as a result of 2024, there is only One “Possessor of Heaven and Earth”.

So there are two kings with two offers:

The King of Salem offer Abraham the things of the world.

The King of Righteousness offers the Blessing of God Most High.

- › Which one satisfies the soul?

This should remind us of the words of Jesus:

Matthew 16:26 ESV

For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?

- Now if I only had 10 mins to speak, I would only focus on this: Understanding Melchizedek.
- When it comes to the central idea—*what it looks like to be blessed by God*—you need to see how this mysterious guy Melchizedek plays in.

1) Who is he? As already noted, he is a righteous king. But also a priest.

- Ruling as King and Offering of Sacrifice are *two radically different God-assigned tasks*.

- › *It takes someone with a radically unique call by God to do both.*

Melchizedek has a unique superiority in his calling from God.

- Melchizedek’s unique superiority is seen in Abraham’s response. (20b)

Some think that the tithe (giving 10 percent to God) is only found in the Law of Moses; only Israel.

Tithing to God is always a display of faith.

2) Where do you find him?

Here, in Gen 14.

Psalm 110:4 (ESV)

“You are a priest forever
after the order of Melchizedek.”

- King David writes of one who has unique superiority—who will be Priest and King.

Hebrews

- Hebrews is a book that really teaches us how to read the OT well. So we see how various laws, places, and people all point to Jesus.

One test case is what you do with Melchizedek.

Hebrews 7:1–3 ESV

For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever.

- The last part is key: it resembles Jesus...and holds an eternal priesthood.
- Heb. draws our focus on two other keys to blessing: Righteousness and Peace.

This helps us to see what it looks like to be blessed by God Most High.

- See, there are many *secondary blessings* that we count (think of the old hymn...)
 - Good health; moderate wealth and possession, enough to share
 - Harmony in relationships
 - Happiness in marriage
 - Contentment in a career
 - Good friends
- › Yet none of those come close to the *primary blessing* of righteousness and peace that come from Christ, and Christ Alone

Psalm 85:10 (ESV)

righteousness and peace kiss each other.

Jesus has the unique and radical call of God to bring both!

Conclusion:

“Righteousness and peace have kissed in Christ—and that is the kiss that the King repeatedly bestows on his bride.” (Kent Hughes)

Imagine a loving husband:

A loving husband does not just kiss his bride on the wedding day and that’s it.

The blessing of his love stays with her—Decades of kisses.

And even on her deathbed, a faithful kiss may be the last physical touch.

So it is in Christ, we’ve been kissed by God’s Righteousness and Peace.

There is a deep covenant relationship of blessing that abides.

—

I may never be able to pull off saying “Bless your heart”.

But I can say to God’s New Covenant People:

Numbers 6:24–26 ESV

The LORD bless you and keep you;

the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;

the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.