

## Abraham, Jacob and You

Do you remember the children's story of King Midas and how everything he touched turned to gold? According to Psalm 1:3, a believer has something in common with Midas because, "... everything he puts his hand to shall prosper." Unfortunately for Midas, he learned too late that there are many things more necessary than gold. While a believer may prosper, he has the wisdom gained by renewing his mind with the Word to make Jesus and not riches the most important thing in his life.

As we have been studying prosperity, we have found that the thrust of the scriptures which deal with prosperity is that - we prosper as we renew our minds with the Word and make Jesus our priority. The thing about prosperity that we haven't touched on is how God first gave prosperity to mankind and why we as believers have the right to appropriate it.

The answer to this is found in the third chapter of Galatians. Verse thirteen tells us that,

*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse of us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree.*

Verse fourteen tells us why Jesus became a curse,

*That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*

God's blessings were poured out upon Abraham, a Gentile who became a Jew by faith. Because Abraham put his faith and trust in the Lord, God set up an everlasting covenant with him. And notice that verse fourteen also says that believers can receive this same promise of the Spirit in the same way, through faith.

The curse of the Law, referred to in the thirteenth verse, is three-fold and includes poverty, sickness, and spiritual death. We were victims of these curses until Jesus went

to the cross for us and exchanged the blessings of Abraham for the curse of the Law. I like that trade, don't you?

Let's see how the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant worked for the Jews. Psalm 105 tells of the nation of Israel leaving the bondage of Egypt. When they left, the Egyptians, showered them with riches, and God, "... *brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes.*"

Not only were they now rich, they were healthy - not one was feeble. Furthermore, according to the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, God fed the Israelites manna and provided water for them while they were in the wilderness. That in itself is astonishing, but that is not all that God did, for we also learn that their shoes and clothes did not wear out for forty years. On top of that, although some of them were children when they left Egypt, they still had the same clothes forty years later. Have you ever thought about this - their shoes and clothes must have grown with them!

Thus, in the midst of a barren land, God sustained approximately 2,000,000 people, and then He took them someplace better, into the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy 8:7-10 tells us about this land:

*For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass. When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.*

Isn't it always the Lord's objective to bring us into something good? Notice, too, that God wasn't going to supply the Israelites with just enough to get along, He was giving to them without scarceness, without lack. According to verse ten, they could even eat until they were full. Some people believe that's wrong because of the masses of starving people in the world, but it isn't. When we have an abundance, God wants us to give, but more than that, He gives us plenty so

that we have the means to get the gospel to the starving world so that they will not be hungry physically or spiritually.

Verses 11-17, caution us not to forget that our "goodly" houses (not shacks), silver, gold, and other blessings come I from God. Then, verse eighteen says,

*But thou shalt remember : the Lord thy God; for it is I he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he swore unto thy fathers ...*

What is this power he gives I us? It's faith. By faith we get I riches to establish His covenant. This means that we then I use the wealth to spread the gospel by causing the heathen to envy us too much that they I will want what we have, the Lord.

Before we end this series on prosperity, I want to call to your attention one man with whom many of us can identify in some way - Jacob. Most of us know that Jacob was deceitful and; it's hard to understand why he became prosperous. Even his name is indicative of his character for Jacob means "supplanter". A more modern rendering is "chiseler". He would take unfair advantage of every opportunity. He even stole the birthright from his brother Esau.

When I said that many could relate to Jacob, I was not implying that you are a chiseler, I rather, the comparison lies in the fact that, like Jacob, you' may face adverse circumstances that seemingly could keep you from prospering.

In Romans 9:13, we learn that before the children were born, God told their mother Rachel, "... *Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated*". We should not assume from this scripture that God arbitrarily hated one and loved the other. This was a means of expressing his hatred for Esau's ways.

Esau, a hunter, was a self-sufficient man, dependent upon his own strength and wisdom.

Jacob was the opposite. He was always trying to manipulate things. Yet, the Lord loved him because He saw that underneath that facade was a heart of faith. That faith is the reason that the Lord blessed him and prospered him.

In the natural, it appeared that Esau would be the more prosperous brother. In fact, he did become very prosperous while ironically, Jacob went to work for an even greater chiseler, Laban. Remember, all his life Jacob had swindled and cheated. Now he was reaping those seeds he had planted and was getting an unwanted hundred-fold return. Nevertheless, God was able to prosper Jacob above and beyond the prosperity of Esau.

As we find out in Genesis 29, Jacob worked for Laban for seven years in order to marry Laban's beautiful daughter Rachel, but on the wedding day Laban deceived him and gave his older daughter Leah instead. Laban also extracted a promise from Jacob to work for him another seven years so that he could marry Rachel.

Poor Jacob, here he was with one wife whose name Leah translates as "cow eyes", and was also committed to continue working for a man who has been cheating him. It appears that Jacob had "been taken". To make matters worse, during those next seven years, his wages were cut ten times! Now those were some overwhelming circumstances.

In spite of all this, God prospered Jacob and at the end of his time with Laban, their financial situations were reversed. Because the wealth of the wicked is laid up for the just, God gave Jacob. Genesis 30:43, speaking of Jacob says,

*And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses.*

In Genesis 31 :7-9, Jacob tells Rachel and Leah,

*And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me. If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the cattle bare speckled: and if he I said thus, the ringstraked I shall be thy hire; then bare I all the cattle ringstraked. Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me.*

When Jacob first went to Laban's, all he had with him was his staff. He mentions this when talking to the Lord in Genesis 32:10,

*I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hath shewed unto thy servants; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan,' and now I am become two bands.*

In fourteen years God had prospered Jacob so much that he now had two complete companies with him - wives, children, animals, gold and silver. If God could bless Jacob in spite of adverse circumstances, He can bless you *too*.

You may be in a job where you have reached your limit. There can be no more promotions, no more raises. Maybe your boss, too, is a chiseler. Maybe you have taken pay cuts to keep your job. Chances are, you still aren't in as bad a fix as Jacob was. His boss wanted to keep him poor, but God made him rich!

You see, Laban may have been Jacob's boss, but he wasn't his source. Likewise,  
Laban may have been Jacob's boss, but he wasn't his source. Likewise, your job is merely one channel for God to use. It isn't the source of your prosperity and it doesn't determine your prosperity. Look beyond that job, that circumstance - use your faith to tap into the blessings of Abraham. After all, they are yours!

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