

C Proper16	<b>Responding to God's Blessing</b> Heb 12.14-29  by Tim Isbell	Preached 9/2/2007
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Thesis: "Brushing off" God's current blessings leads to bitterness; giving God the gift of thank-filled and worship-filled lives leads to the ultimate blessing: God's presence in conversational relationship.

## The "Laundry Basket Law"

My wife thinks I'm laundry-basket-challenged. You see, she has placed 4 baskets in our walk-in closet for me to put dirty laundry in. The light clothes go in one, the dark ones go in another, and something else describes the third one, and the fourth one is for really white things (needing bleach, I guess).

And over the years she has come to me many times complaining about finding my clothes in the wrong basket. I try, but sometimes I just can't decide if it's really light or dark enough for the right basket. And there's something about zippers that seem to affect the choice, too. And some of my golf shirts are 95% white with a little color somewhere, like the collar.

Recently she sat me down to show me some posters she made to help me obey the Laundry Basket Law. She took a picture of each basket, pasted them on a 1-sheet collage, and then above each basket wrote down a description of what goes in that one.

It's helping, but I sometimes I discover that I've violated the Laundry Basket Law again!

## Read Heb 12.14-17, then notice:

- v14: only the holy will see the Lord... have an address in Kingdom.
- V15: see that nobody in your fellowship fails to receive God's blessing. If people do "brush off" the blessings of God, this passage says it will lead them to bitterness.
- Re-read V16 and link it to the Gen 31 story (you may need to tell it).

### **It was a new concept for me to see Esau's rejection of his birthright as a sin against God.**

Essentially God offered him a blessing; Esau rejected it in favor of a meal.

Jacob saw value in God's blessing, even though he wasn't in line to receive it. So when the opportunity arose, he negotiated to get it. Later on he even played an underhanded trick on Esau to secure the blessing.

Now I see why God favored Jacob and rejected Esau: it was because Jacob valued

God's blessing and Esau didn't.

Later Esau wanted the blessing; but it was too late!

## **My concern for many of us is we discount the God's blessing**

**Instead, we prefer lesser alternatives:**

### ***Some students discount the blessings of school ...***

I've heard it often in the past 2-3 weeks. I ask, "How is school this year?". The student replies: "School is boring, I just like recess, or PE, or seeing my friends ... "

They discount the blessing of school, and it does lead to bitterness. Hmm. Maybe scripture is right.

God is preparing us for ultimate blessing: a life of reigning over a significant part of Kingdom - forever. He's giving us the gift of education in this life as part of that preparation. We need to treasure the gift of education and make most of it.

### ***Other examples:***

- Adults who discount the blessing of work
- Married people who discount the blessings of having a spouse
- Parents who discount the blessings of children.
- People who have a room with a roof to sleep in, as opposed to <Russell> who sleeps by the freeway. Russell values the gift of a couple of Subway sandwiches and a bus pass while some of us disregard the blessing of a room to sleep, ample food to eat, a car.

### ***How do I feel when I give someone a gift and they don't appear to value it?***

They don't use it, or they don't appear to enjoy it? Sometimes they take it and keep right on wanting something different or more.

Eventually I give up trying. They simply won't receive it. If it's my child who disregards my gifts, I eventually get angry at them.

Sure I still love them, but I get angry with them.

### ***I bet God feels that way about us.***

If we discount his blessings too long and he'll stop giving them. mMaybe he figures if we get in enough trouble we'll come to him, acknowledge past blessings, confess/repent, ask for help. And then maybe we'll be ready to receive.

## **Read Hebrews 12:18-29**

Do you see what happened here?

At Mt. Sinai the Israelites disregarded God's blessing.

Back when they were in Egypt they cried out to God for deliverance from slavery. God

sent Moses, sets them free, fed them, and gave them a promise of a place to live, and (most important) offered them his presence.

But rather than worshipping God with thankful hearts, for decades they...

- Complained about their situation.
- Wanted to return to slavery in Egypt.
- Worshiped other gods - that were not gods at all!

Ever wonder why God seems so distant from the Israelites in the Old Testament, why he gave them laws rather than himself?

It was because the Law was all they were ready for: do this, don't do this. Put dark clothes in this basket; light ones in this basket. In short spurts they obeyed these laws, but only out of fear.

### **This wasn't God's ultimate plan for them; it was preparation.**

When God offered a personal relationship they responded, "Moses, don't let God talk to us directly. You be the intermediary. You go talk to him, then come back tell us what he wants, and we'll do it."

The Israelites disregarded God's blessings just like Esau did.

And just like in the Genesis 31 case, God got angry and removed his full blessing from them both.

I understand the Israelites/Esau's point of view – but I'm disappointed with them. I understand God's point of view, too – his anger and his removal of blessings.

### **Remember the 2 mountains? Do you see the contrast?**

Mt. Sinai, where Moses went to get Law represents the earthly "schoolmaster" preparing Israel for Christ. It was a temporary arrangement. Even-so the Israelites disregard for it warranted stoning!

Mt. Zion, Jerusalem, is where Jesus went to give his life to offer us a personal relationship with God.

At Sinai the law was given; at Zion it is perfectly fulfilled.

At Sinai, a large distance separated people from God. At Zion, Jesus offers unrestricted access to God.

### ***Moses was the mediator of Old Covenant – when the people were terrified in God's presence;***

Old Testament encounters with God were scary, partly because people had only a sketchy understanding of God and they hadn't yet learned how to act around him.

### ***Jesus is the mediator of the New Covenant. – when people are comfortable in God's presence.***

New Testament encounters with Jesus are warm/friendly. They often happen in the community of believers who gather for festive worship.

## **There's something I didn't tell you about the Laundry Basket Law.**

Sometimes I find Robin's dark clothes in the light clothes basket, and vice versa.

After ignoring it a while I finally to her and said, "Hey, why do I have to obey the Laundry Basket Law but you don't?" (I don't actually call her a hypocrite, but that's what I'm thinking.)

Know what she says?

"You have to obey the Laundry Basket Law because you don't understand the deep secrets of washing clothes like I do. The best I can expect from you is that you obey the Laundry Basket Law. But me, I am the Laundry Goddess and I know things about laundry that you don't. So the Laundry Basket Law is for you, not for me. Maybe someday you'll understand the deep secrets of laundry washing, but not yet."

So I'm still living in the Old Laundry Basket Covenant. Hopefully someday I'll graduate to the New Laundry Basket Covenant.

## **There are 2 key take-aways from today's message:**

### **1. Stop disregarding God's blessings.**

If we keep this up we'll end up bitter, eventually God will get angry with us and remove the blessings we're disregarding.

### **2. Respond to God's blessings.**

Re-read Heb 12.28-29.

Scripture is clear: God is looking for our response in the form of living thankful lives and also in giving him all our worship. These are not optional.

<b>Other resources:</b>
Click on the link for the <a href="#">Google Slides for this sermon</a> . (Similar to PowerPoint)
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