

Rehearsing Blessings and Thankfulness

In the 1950s and 60s, work-place specialists predicted (because of the rapidly increasing American affluence) that the 40 hours work week would quickly vanish, with 30 hours becoming the norm. They were right in foreseeing a shifting workweek, but wrong in predicting the direction of this move. What they left out of their predictive models were the powers of envy and greed marketing experts would exploit to entice people to buy more and more, believing "We need . . ." "I HAVE to have. . ."

The American economy has continued to prosper (far beyond anyone's wildest projections), the relative prices of most products have fallen significantly, but people want EVEN more. Just today, I heard the average new American home has increased 20% in size in the last 20 years! A greater percentage of people work today as women find they "must" work to make ends meet. But, chasing the ever-changing "end" lines set by Madison Avenue is a dead-end road. The ends get wider quicker than our ability to meet them. And we should expect this trend to continue! Who should reasonably expect to make moving ends meet?

Bounty is a blessing ONLY when we recognize and appreciate it. Otherwise, the POTENTIAL blessing can become a REAL curse (at no fault to the one providing). Grace, for most Americans, would be the revelation and realization that:

The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
surely I have a delightful inheritance. Psalm 16:6

because riches, without the grace of thankfulness and contentment, is not a blessing. Who could be richer (no matter how much they have) than the one who feels "The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places." And, who more cursed (no matter how much they have) than the one "working like the devil" for more, more, just a little more? All of us exhibit the traits we see in Ahab (in 1 Kings Chapter 21), the wicked king, if/when we are not careful.

The historical, Christian, ends have been the 1st and 10th Commandments:

- "You shall have no other gods besides me."
- "You shall not covet your neighbor's house . . . or anything that

belongs to your neighbor."

And we need to remember, coveting is not only wanting what your neighbor owns, but being able to acquire the same as (or more than) your neighbor. In the "old days" people would say (you don't hear this wise saying anymore):

"Don't try to keep up with the Joneses."

"Cursed is the man who moves his neighbor's boundary stone." (Deuteronomy 27:17) Just as moving someone's boundary stone is evil, it is stupid to move our own "ends" (or let others do so) to our detriment! We should daily seek the grace of "knowing the truth" so we will be free of the continual, persistent, subtle, shrewd and slick influences of the world to curse the GREAT blessings we NOW possess in a obsessive pursuit of the little we may not have! We are our own worst enemies if we allow someone to change our boundary lines and "ends."

If we set our boundary lines FIRMLY and UNYIELDINGLY in appreciating God (the 1st Commandment) and what He has given us (the 10th Commandment) we have a good chance of being "delivered from the evil one!"

KNOW AND RESIST THE ENEMY!

And the greatest PRACTICAL way to do this? *Deuteronomy 6* reveals the key:

These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your fathers, promised you.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. IMPRESS THEM ON YOUR CHILDREN. TALK ABOUT THEM when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.

Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

When the Lord your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you--a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant--then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

Fear the Lord your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name. Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you; for the Lord your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land. Do not test the Lord your God as you did at Massah. Be sure to keep the commands of the Lord your God and the stipulations and decrees he has given you. Do what is right and good in the Lord's sight, so that it may go well with you and you may go in and take over the good land that the Lord promised on oath to your forefathers, thrusting out all your enemies before you, as the Lord said.

In the future, when your son asks you, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the Lord our God has commanded you?" tell him: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Before our eyes the Lord sent miraculous signs and wonders--great and terrible--upon Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household. But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land that he promised on oath to our forefathers. The Lord commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the Lord our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today. And if we are careful to obey all this law before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness.

We can continually
rehearse our blessings
or
bellyache
about our perceived curses.

"Choose this day whom you will serve . . ." Joshua 24:15