

Text: Genesis 25:1-18

Title: "Taking Inventory of the Blessings of God"

Time: 12/7/08 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: Some of you know that I work for a bottle manufacturing company part time to help support the ministry here. Accounting for inventories is always a challenge in companies like ours. You can pull up an inventory report on the computer and get an inventory balance, but you do not really know that what you are looking at on the computer is correct until you actually do a physical inventory, where you go out and manually count what you have and adjust the computer accordingly.

We as God's people often lose sight of the inventory of God's blessing in our lives, and it is good for us from time to time to pause, think, and recount the inventory of the Lord's blessings that we possess. You say, "Pastor, this is sounding like a Thanksgiving Day message one week late." Well, last week I departed from our study of Genesis to go to Ps. 100, and I did not find out that Genesis 25 would have been an excellent Thanksgiving Day passage until it was too late, so returning to our study of Genesis this week means that we will have two Thanksgiving Day messages in a row.

The title of the message this week is "Taking Inventory of the Blessings of God," and I want us to notice seven of these that Genesis 25 helps us to recount as it describes the end of the life of godly Abraham.

I. God blesses His people with recovery over time (v. 1).

Illustration: We have all heard the axiom that "it takes time to heal." That is correct. In fact, the ability of the human body to heal is one of the fascinating aspects of God's creative design. We are fearfully and wonderfully made in this sense.

The best illustration I have of this is my left index finger. I chopped it up pretty severely while working at a place called Wheatland Crafts working my way through college. Today, the finger has recovered as best as it can, and this has been a blessing. The condition of the finger is not as robust as it would be had the damage of the injury never occurred, but I am also a smarter operator of power tools now.

Application: One of the blessings we read about in Genesis 25 is the fact that God has a way of taking tragedies, injuries, and times of great loss, and then allowing those things to heal over time. Paul says in Romans that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” God uses all things for our good, the good things and the bad things.

We see three evidences of how He helps us to recover from bad things in the passage.

1. Verse 1 describes how that Abraham recovers from the loss of his dear wife, Sarah. God gives him another, Keturah.
2. Verse 9 describes a reconciliation between Isaac and Ishmael as they together bury their father. Ishmael was not around for the burial of Sarah, but he was for the burial of Abraham. Here we have a recovery from the heartache of the divisiveness of former times.
3. Verse 12 mentions again that Ishmael was the son of Hagar, the handmaid of Sarah, not the wife of Abraham. And yet the passing of time has taken some of the sting of even this sin away, for Ishmael is mentioned so that his progeny could be noted as the blessing of God upon his life.

It is our good God’s blessing to give His people recovery from the heartaches they experience over time. All things work together for good to them that love God and are called by Him.

II. God blesses His people with the daily miracle of new life (vv. 1-4).

Application: There is some discussion among Bible students about whether or not Abraham had all these children with Keturah before or after the death of Sarah. The reason this is so is that the Bible describes the miracle of Isaac's birth as not only a healing of Sarah's ability to reproduce, but also a healing of Abraham (Rom. 4:19; see also Gen. 17:17, 18:11-12; Heb. 11:11-12).

Now in the case of Sarah, this healing was evidently a one-time event. Sarah never had more children after Isaac. Some conclude that it must have been so for Abraham as well, therefore he had taken Keturah for a wife prior to Isaac's birth. This approach, however, misses an awful lot of the point of the narrative about Hagar. Remember that Ishmael was only 14 years older than Isaac. There is simply not enough time for all of Keturah's sons prior to Isaac's birth.

What all this means is that when God worked a miracle to enable Abraham to father a son, it was not a one-time thing. This was a blessing that Abraham continued to enjoy.

What happened to Abraham physically is a picture of what has happened to us who know the Lord spiritually (Rom. 4:17, " (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead [or who gives life to the dead], and calleth those things which be not as though they were. "; Eph. 2:4-5, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)").

Everyday, we who are regenerated are spiritually alive because of the life-giving miracle of God's salvation. Our dead-

ness is gone. Our regeneration, our new spiritual life, is a daily miracle, and one that can offer life to others as well.

III. God blesses His people with the gift of His Son (vv. 5-6).

Illustration: There are some contexts in life in which only the real thing will do. Substitutes and additives are simply not allowed. The day I married my wife, there was only one who was allowed to wear a white flowing wedding dress and walk down the aisle in the arm of her father. We were not allowed to call in a sub and have someone else take Maureen's place for that part of the ceremony. We were not allowed to add anyone on. No other young lady was needed to clasp the other arm of my father-in-law as they walked down the aisle. That day Maureen was the young lady of promise, the young lady of the covenant of marriage. Only she would do.

Application: The text before us makes a big deal about the fact that Abraham sent the sons of Keturah away from his son Isaac (v. 6). The Hebrew word for *sent* in verse 6 is an intensive form; this is an emphasis of the passage. Only Isaac would do.

Why is this the case? Well, it is because Isaac is the son of the covenant, the son of promise. Only he would do because only he was connected to the Abrahamic covenant. Remember that as the first descendant of Abraham, Isaac is a fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, and as a fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, Isaac is a type of Christ, that descendent of Abraham in whom all the nations of the earth will be blessed (Gal. 3:16, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ").

The fact that only Isaac would do teaches us the truth that only Christ will do when it comes to God's promise of salvation. Just like Abraham sent his other sons away, we must see that no other savior can save. God the Father treats his son Jesus

Christ in much the same way that Abraham treated Isaac (Matt. 17:1-8; at the Mount of Transfiguration the Father said, "This is My Beloved Son (not Moses and Elijah); hear Him!"). We must hear Him, and Him alone, in order to be saved.

And what do we hear when we hear Him? We see Him nailed to the cross suffering in our place for our sins, and what do we hear Him say? "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Have you heard the Savior on the cross pray that prayer for you? Have you thanked Him for that amazing forgiveness? No other savior can pray this for us.

IV. God blesses His people with victory over the grave (vv. 7-10).

Illustration: It has been fascinating to watch some of the shifts between the campaign and the administration of our nation's future president. He has said himself that campaign rhetoric does not normally suit governing very well. The campaign message was that Iraq needs to step up and be taught a lesson and we are going to be out of there in 16 months. The realities of governing are that Iraq had just approved a treaty with us that has us there for at least three more years to ensure victory.

It is one thing to talk about how to deal with an enemy in order to get people to vote for you, and quite another to actually do what it takes to defeat that enemy.

Application: Well, God has defeated the worst of man's enemies. Death is a conquered enemy. The passage describes the death of Abraham as that of passing to his people, the other people of God who had gone on before him. Death is no longer a terror, only a bridge to a better existence. This description of Abraham's death taunts its terrors as surely as does the great resurrection chapter of the NT: 1 Cor. 15:25-26, 54-57.

Do you know this victory, or do the prospects of death still haunt you with fear?

V. God blesses His people with hope for the next generation (v. 11).

Illustration: I spoke with a man this past week named Dr. Tom Holye. He is a Colonel and chaplain in the U.S. Airforce, and he has undertaken a ministry called “Bible and Science Ministries.” He travels to churches speaking on the importance of creation, and he mentioned on the phone that time and again he has witnessed young people miss the blessing of God, which their forefathers embraced, because of the theology of evolution, with which the paganism of public education has disciplined them.

Applicatino: The phrase, “After Abraham died, God blessed Isaac,” describes a work of God, which Satan is doing everything in his power to keep your kids and mine from experiencing – that God should bless them as He has us.

Yet in spite of the wickedness of the Canaan we live in, God’s blessing is available to the next generation. We need to be good parents, and our children need to be disciplined in the faith.

Is it the burden of your heart to disciple your kids in the faith, to have them consistently under the teaching of the word of God? Satan is never slack about influencing them in the other direction. We need to be vigilant and faithful in this regard.

VI. God blesses His people with promises well kept (vv. 12-16, 17:20).

Application: God cannot lie. We must trust him. I am sure that the prospects for Hagar and Ishmael looked pretty dim to

Abraham back in 17:20. But by the time Abraham died, he was able to look back and see that God indeed keeps his promise.

Faithful waiting is an important part of experiencing the blessing of promise fulfilled.

VII. God blesses His people with good news for all the world (vv. 17-18).

Application: Did you notice that Ishmael was gathered to his people in the same sense that Abraham was? Well, it turns out that the salvation promise that saved Abraham also saved Ishmael. In fact, this passage is used by the prophet Isaiah to describe an evangel that brings the good news of salvation to all the world [Isa. 59:20-60:9; note the mention of the sons of Keturah (v. 6; Midian and Ephah (Gen. 25:4)) and Ishmael (v. 7; Kedar was his second son (Gen. 25:13))].

Did you notice that this is not only another Thanksgiving Day message? It can now also qualify as our first Christmas message (v. 6, *gold and incense is gold and frankincense*). This prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled in the worship of the kings of the east at the birth of Christ [see Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3:447]. His birth is good news of great joy which shall be to all people (Luke 2:10). May God find us faithful proclaiming this good news as these kings of old were.

Conclusion: So just as Genesis 25 reminds us of the many blessings that God bestowed upon the life of Abraham, we can rejoice that we share in many of these blessings too. We simply need to take inventory of the mighty blessings of God in the warehouse of our lives today. For those who have placed their faith in Abraham's son, they are counted in the covenant as belonging to the nations describes by the phrase, "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 22:18).

Ours is the blessings of Abraham — ultimate recovery from everything that went wrong over time; the daily miracle of new life in Christ, abundant and free; the gift of God's own Son whose prayer for our forgiveness we hear; victory over the grave — we too shall be gathered to our people; hope for the next generation, that they can have these blessings too; and the gospel's good news for a needy world.

All we need to do is take inventory, and we shall know how blessed we are.

“A man came — I think it was actually in Philadelphia — on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction — the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

— David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*