

COUNT YOUR MANY BLESSINGS

Often we sing the song, "count your many blessings, name them one by one". The fact is, we would be unable to count the many blessings we receive if we tried. We can count our blessings, but there will always be more that we could have added to our list. God's blessings can be divided into two categories, blessings that are unconditional and blessings that are conditional. Let us consider our blessings as they relate to these two categories.

First, there are blessings from God that are unconditional. Life itself is a blessing given to us from God. God created the world and all that is therein (Gen. 1:1ff; Exo. 20:11). It matters not if one is a child of God or not, he can thank God for his very existence. Certainly we should be thankful for the very elements by which we live. These elements are available for everyone, no matter their spiritual state. Jesus said, "for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45). The revelation of God's will to man, now written so that we may study it and know God's will, is a blessing that is provided regardless of the righteousness or unrighteousness of the reader. It is indeed, the mind of God in man's language.

But, there are many blessings that are conditional. In fact, the response of those who have learned the blessing of God's word will determine whether they receive certain "conditional" blessings. The greatest blessing of all is to be children of God, "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17). Another great conditional blessing that we have as children of God, that those outside of Christ do not have is access to the Father through prayer. Isaiah pointed out that iniquity and sin would cause one to not be heard by God (Isa. 59:1-2). Peter quotes from one of David's Psalms (Psa. 34:12-16) when he writes, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (I Pet. 3:12). Oh, the many, many blessings we have "in Christ". In fact, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3).

Indeed, there is need for us to count our many blessings and name all that we can, both the material blessings and the spiritual blessings, both the unconditional blessings and the conditional ones. *Tilis*

JUST KEEPING OURSELVES UNSPOTTED

Sometimes people will chide or ridicule someone who is diligently trying to follow God's word exactly as given by God. In other words, they are demanding scriptural proof for all that they do and refusing to do that which is condemned by God's word or not authorized by God's word. The mockers will say that this person is being too picky, "Pharisee-cal", or fanatical. However, the truth of the matter is, such a person is "just keeping themselves unspotted from the world".

James wrote, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). This last part of this verse is a challenge to say the least. Any and all trespasses against the word of God is a spot or blemish upon our soul, just as our clothes can become soiled by coming in contact with mud or grease. There is no doubt that we will on occasion get a stain on both our clothes and our souls. But, the goal is to keep ourselves unspotted, and then when the occasional spot occurs, clean it immediately.

Isaiah said, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18). It is the blood of the Lamb that takes away our sins (John 1:29). He has "...loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rev. 1:5). However, many go back and jump right back into the "mud" from which they have been cleansed. Peter said, "But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (II Pet. 2:22).

Yet, we do not have to jump into every "mud hole" we walk by. Jesus spoke of the church at Sardis, saying, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy" (Rev. 3:4). Paul wrote, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Cor. 6:17-18). Jude wrote, "And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 23). When we find a stain on our soul, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9). Ya'll stay clean now! *Tilis*