

The Glory of and Problems with Blessings – *Deut 1:9-18*

Introduction – If you were giving a summary of what happened to the people of God over the forty year journey, would you begin here as Moses does in vv9-18? And yet, as we will see, it is the blessing of the Law given to the people of God which is part of the promise. This is part of what will bring forth the promise that through Abraham “all the nations of the earth will be blessed.”

When Blessings Bring Problems (vv9-11) – First, Moses reminds them that God has already done the impossible, just as He promised. This nation exists because a barren woman and a man brought forth the miracle-child, the son of laughter, Isaac. Now, they are a multitude “*as the stars of the heaven*” (Gen 22:17-18). That promise is coming into greater fulfillment and continues in this age (Rev 7:9-10). In fact that is exactly the trajectory that Moses has in mind in his blessing in v11.

“I alone am not able to bear you” – But with blessings come problems, and this is the way it always is. Moses had led a multitude out that could not be governed by one man alone (Ex 18). With freedom from slavery come new problems: who’s in charge and how are we to live? With the blessing of growth come growth problems. With the blessing of marriage come marriage problems. With the blessing of a vocation come business problems. With the blessing of children come child-raising problems.

Start with Thankfulness (v11) – Learn from Moses here. What is the first response as he notes the problem? He prays for more of the same. He notes the blessing and thanks God for the blessing and asks for more blessing. Then, in that thankfulness, he turns to solve the problems those blessings have brought.

The Law for All Men (vv12-18) – And the problem solving occurs by applying the Law for all men in all situations. The Law is the basis for serving over tens or over thousands (v15). The Law settles difficulties between brethren (v16). The Law shows no partiality (vv16-17) for the Law is the character of God (Luke 20:21, Rom 2:11, 1 Pet 1:17, James 2:24). The law is a gift of protection. For the man on death row, the law is death; but for the godly, the same law is life in that it protects him and his property from those who steal or destroy.

Leadership Under the Law – Application of the law requires leaders, but those leaders themselves are subject to the law. They are “*wise and knowledgeable men*” (v15) so that they might “*judge righteously*” and “*not show partiality in judgment*” (vv16, 17). And since everyone is under the law, leaders are chosen as representatives of the people with some form of approval (v13). And when hard decisions have to be made, these servant-leaders are not afraid of men because they understand the judgment is God’s (v17). This is how it is with servants in the church (i.e. Acts 6:2-6) as well as in the civil government (Rom 13:1, 4); both are deacons or ministers of God’s law.

The Law, the Law-Giver and Leadership – Why should men rule over other men? Because God says so; it is not simply a pragmatic decision. Atheistic governments and anarchy are both abominations. Connected to this –

- Laws of the land always point to the god of the land. Obedience always starts with worship. In the Roman Empire the senate had to approve the gods (bringing the ridicule of Tertullian) while Christian creeds affirm God’s authority over all creation, attributing all authority in heaven and earth to Christ.

- The wicked fruit of the Enlightenment is illustrated by the French and Russian revolutions where there was an outright denial of government and law resting upon the shoulders of the God-Man, the Messianic Prince of Peace. William Penn wrote, “Men must choose to be governed by God or they condemn themselves to be ruled by tyrants.” If there is no law above the State and no Personal Law-giver, then the State becomes god and it will remake the world in its own image.

- The Church is not to rule over the State, which is not the same as saying Christ is to rule over the State. Civil servants are ministers of God and thus must bow the knee to Christ, the Personal Law-giver.

Loyalty to the Law and the Law-Giver – How is it that our country, with so much salt and light, lives in such darkness? Like Israel, the problem is the neglect of the Law and the Law-Giver. What would a country be like that said it would only appoint and uphold leaders who themselves upheld the law and office of the Lord Jesus Christ?

God has given us glorious promises and blessings and we are a growing multitude. How are we to love God and one another in the complexities of society? The Law is expounded by Moses and throughout all the Word in order for us to spread this life of the covenant into all areas of our lives – as individuals, families, churches, and nations.