

Blessing

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings:" (Ephesians 1:3)

This is a study of the New Testament word "blessing". We expect to answer the following questions:

- What does the word "blessing" mean?
- How does God bless us? What does He bless us with?
- What are the blessings that God gives?
- How do we get these blessings, and how do we make use of them?
- How can we be a blessing to others?

THE CONCEPT OF BLESSING

There are three New Testament Greek words related directly to the English word "blessing".

(eulogeitos) is an adjective meaning "well spoken of; praised"

(eulogew) is a verb: "to speak well of; to praise; to call down God's gracious power"

(eulogia) is the noun form, meaning "praise; fine speaking"

These words show up very seldom in Greek classical writing. The concepts are Hebrew in origin and the idea of blessing permeates the Old Testament. The New Testament Greek words are direct translations from Hebrew. These same Greek words are used more than 400 times in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) to represent the Hebrew concepts of blessing.

The concept among the Old Testament Jews was that God possesses and dispenses all blessing. Adam, Noah, the patriarchs and Moses are all blessed by God.

Moses, in turn pronounces a parting blessing on the twelve tribes (Deut. 33:1 ff).

The idea of "blessing" was also closely related to the question of inheritance, passing blessing from father to son. Jacob blessed Joseph in Gen. 48:15. Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh were blessed in Gen 48:20. Jacob put his right hand on Ephraim's head, although he was the younger.

In the Bible both blessing and cursing are said to be passed down through two or more generations. For example, there is the concept of the four generation curse and divine discipline for a family that is out of fellowship.

In the Christian life, the inheritance that we pass down to our children is spiritual and doctrinal.

DEFINITION

The problem in the definition of the word "blessing" is that it is not a direct translation from the Greek. The word "blessing" is a borrowed word which has attained its present day meaning by reason of long usage, rather than by etymological accuracy.

From the World Book Dictionary:

- 1a. "to consecrate (a thing) by religious rite, formula, or prayer" e.g., "the bishop blessed the new church"
- 1b. "to make holy or sacred." e.g., "And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it", Gen. 2:3
2. "to ask God's favor for; to commend to God's favor or protection", e.g., "God bless mommy...daddy"
3. "to wish good for; to feel grateful to"
4. "to make happy or fortunate"
5. "to praise, to glorify, to call holy"
6. "to guard or protect from evil", e.g. "God bless this house."
7. "to make the sign of the cross over; to ward off evil."

Question: Why was the English word "blessing" chosen to represent (eulogeitos)?

The answer is found in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) which is one of the world's greatest detective books.

OED: to bless

1. "to make sacred; to hallow (something)."
- "The word "bless" is from the Old Teutonic (German) bletsian, from heathen blood sacrifices. German: das Blut. English: blood.
- "The meaning, then, was 'to mark (or affect in some way) with blood (or a sacrificial animal)."

“The sense development of the word ‘bless’ was greatly influenced by its having been chosen (in the early English church ceremonies) to translate the Latin (*benedicere*) and the Greek (**eulogeitos**).”

(End of OED comment)

This concurs very well with the origin of the concept of "blessing" in the Bible. In the Old Testament (OT), the Hebrew word (**baw-rahk**), meaning “to kneel”, was used one way or another hundreds of times to convey the meaning of respect or adoration. You would kneel before a king in respect or to offer thanks for something. Of course, you would kneel to God in adoration, praise, thanksgiving and supplication.

The Septuagint (LXX) translators chose the Greek (**eulogeitos**) to represent (**baw-rahk**) (more than 400 times). So, among Greek speaking Jews, this was a common word for praise, thanksgiving, respect, etc.

Latin writers used the verb form (*benedicere*) to translate the Greek, preferring to offer the literal sense of the Greek.

I think they wanted a strictly English word so they could get away from the Catholic Latin expressions.

The word “bless” was not a literal translation, but it had religious overtones, and they used it even though it had come from a heathen source.

So, there was a long and varied series of Jewish, heathen and Christian associations to blend in the English use of the word “bless”.

Therefore, “blessing” is a word which has a position in Christian vocabulary by reason of long standing usage. But it does not directly translate (**eulogeitos**).

BUT - there is a modern version which does have a direct translation and it is to this version that I pay honor. The version is in Spanish. In Ephesians 1:3 in the Spanish, the word (*bendito*) is the past participle of the verb (*bendecir*).

It means, literally, "to say good things or good words."

There is no doubt to Spanish speaking people what this word means. *Decir* is one of the most

common Spanish words. The translators had no extra baggage from the English, so they translated directly from the Greek (via the Latin).

The English equivalent to *bendición* is “benediction”, also from the Greek by way of Latin.

So, (**eulogeitos**) => *benedicere* => *bendición* => benediction => “praise”

BLESSING IN THE BIBLE

The word “blessing” recognizes the existence and deity of God. It tells us that we can be aware of His existence and have inner happiness because of who and what He is.

It also tells us, from the Greek, that God was thinking about us in favorable terms, that He had a mental attitude of love, grace and mercy toward us from before the beginning of time.

Praise, or blessing, for anyone comes from a mental attitude of love and appreciation for that person. God makes an initial move toward us because of His mental attitude of love. He provides us His graciousness, His gift of salvation, His spiritual gifts, all of which are manifestations of His love toward us. He thought “good words” toward us.

He has provided all blessings for us as an expression of His love. Our response of blessing or praise toward God, and toward others, is a response from a mental attitude of appreciation.

Eph. 1:3 deals with God’s initiation and our response.

Blessing begins in the mind of God (Love, Grace, “Good Words”, a Frame of Reference influenced by His thinking). Therefore, He gives us “all blessings.”

The Christian learns of these blessings through Bible study and develops a mental attitude of praise and thanksgiving, “good words” with which to express appreciation and with these “good words” we “bless” God.

These are words of vocabulary, of thinking divine viewpoint. Blessing is not a feeling, but objective thinking based on divine viewpoint, a frame of reference built by knowledge of doctrine.

With edification we build the ability to think about God, which enables us to receive and enjoy blessing and to be a blessing to others.

Heb. 6:7, "For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and brings forth herbs for them by whom it is dressed, receives blessing from God."

The most basic form of evangelism is to talk about God's blessing which are available to everyone, saved or not.

Homework: From Acts 14:8-18, determine how Paul and Barnabas used the concept of blessing to evangelize people who were completely ignorant of God.

The idea for the hymn entitled Showers of Blessing was taken, with good intentions, from Eze. 34:24 ff. [Read Eze. 34:24 to 31]

These are tremendous verses of promise and blessing from the hand of the Lord. There is no pleading and here no wishful thinking. The blessings are already given to us, either now or in the future when prophecies are fulfilled.

We should plead to be made into showers of

blessing, or rather, showers of (**eulogeitos**), showers of benedicere, showers of *bendición*, showers of "benediction", showers of "good speaking."

Study Eph. 4:29 ff on the concept of speech that ministers grace.

See also, Eph. 5, "neither foolishness ... but rather giving of thanks."

1 Pet. 3:9

Why should we not be generous? We have an enormous inheritance from our heavenly Father, enough to share with others.

James 3:10 and John 7:38

We are to be fountains of blessing.

Matt. 25:34; Daniel 4:33,34; (Blessing is not mentioned in Matt. 6:25-34 and Josh. 1:7,8

Ephesians 1:3 (expanded translation) "**Worthy of praise and glorification is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the one who has provided us benefits and every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ:**"
