

99-05-16c

The verb for bless here in verse 18, as I said, is Barak. B-A-R-A-K. You have more than one church in the United States.

In fact, there are several that are Baraka church. This is the noun form from Barak. It goes back to an Old Testament passage that talks about the valley of blessing and so forth.

But B-A-R-A-K, this is the verb for bless. In the past, God said, I will make you a blessing. In you, all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

And you have the nifal, the passive stem of Barak. But this is the first and only time that God uses this particular form of Barak. It's the hithpahel.

That ought to tell you a lot right there. This is the hithpahel stem of Barak. The hithpahel is the reflexive stem.

You know what it means when something's reflexive? It means you do this to yourself. In you, all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves, shall find their blessing. Depends on what they decide.

It depends on what they choose. What they decide, what they lay hold of, when they come in contact with Abraham and the things that Abraham represents, that's where blessing is going to be found. This is not a passive blessing anymore.

This is not an active blessing anymore. Abraham is going to be the place where people are going to come to bless themselves, to find their blessing. He's going to be the place where that blessing resides.

And of course, you look at the nation of Israel, you look at Jesus Christ himself, the son of David, this is the place you go to find your blessing. All the nations of the earth shall bless themselves. Why? Because you have obeyed my voice.

It is the obedience in our hearts. As I mentioned before, it's not how many people are coming, where is your visible impact, how many ministries are you participating in, how many people's lives are you touching. Even in the best parts of our Christianity today, you find the measure is how many people are being touched.

God is blessing us because look at the number of people that we're able to have an impact on. We just can't help ourselves. This is the way we think, that this is the measure.

But when you think, if you don't remember anything else from Genesis 22, this is a thing that is done in the sight of God, and this is when God is the most pleased. This is when

God doubles his blessing. This is when God emphasizes it and says, Abraham, I said I was going to bless you before, but you have seen nothing yet.

Wait until I get finished blessing you. People all over the world, people down through history, are going to bless themselves in you because you have obeyed my voice. If we find the means within ourselves in what God has provided through his word and his spirit, to lay our all on the altar in God's eyes, it doesn't matter if anybody else sees it.

It doesn't matter if anybody else knows about it. If we concentrate on being pleasing to God in God's sight, in that place where only God sees, if we're willing to take those rich things that he has given us, and like that wave offering before the Lord, put them back on the altar when the occasion arises. There are some things that we get to keep, just like the priests.

There are other things that we may be called upon to put at risk or to give up altogether. To recognize who we are and why we are here. To recognize that we have been sprinkled with the blood of the perfect sacrifice.

We are bought with a price. We are sanctified. We are called.

We have a purpose. And in the secret places of our heart, in the invisible areas of our life, to be willing to put that before God when called, when the choice comes, when priorities are set, when priorities have to be observed, when it's more than speaking, when now it's action, when nobody may know the difference. We could just as easily compromise.

We could just as easily do a thing that isn't the perfect and the right and the best thing. But because we're in the sight of God, because we see ourselves on Mount Moriah, and we do the thing that is pleasing in God's sight because it's pleasing in God's sight, because that is what he asks of us. And if it means putting everything on the line, if it means the possibility of losing everything, that's fine.

So much the better. We belong to God. This is when God can bestow his richest and greatest blessings on us.

And this is when we can be the greatest blessing to others. It's not going out and pursuing overt ministry. It is becoming that person that lives to please God.

That is how we bless others. That is when God can use us. It's at the very point that we're willing to give up things that God can give them to us.

If we value material prosperity, if we value ministry too much, God can't really give us ministry. God can't really give us material things because we will destroy ourselves with them. It is when that thing no longer matters as much as pleasing God.

That's when God can give it to us and it does not destroy us. It is at the point that Abraham can give up Isaac, that God gives him back Isaac and all of the descendants that Isaac represents. That's the blessing for the world.

Because God can give Isaac back to Abraham now because Abraham has not confused the gift with the giver. Abraham, if called upon, will give the gift back because pleasing God is the most important thing. That's when God can give him Isaac.

That's when the substitutionary atonement of the sacrifice is going to have its greatest meaning. This is the thing that we have to pursue. This is our calling.

Jesus Christ is our sacrifice. He has fulfilled all of those things that we saw over in the Levitical code and in the sanctification of the priests. He is all of those things to us.

But we tend to want to grab hold of the fat and keep hold of it. We live a life of convenience. We acquiesce and we obey in the places where it's easy.

But sometimes it's hard. Sometimes it requires risk. Sometimes it requires looking at the yawning chasm of the unknown in the future and saying, I don't know what will happen if I do this right thing.

If I do what I really ought to do, everything is at risk. Everything is unknown. Everything hangs in the balance.

That's what God is looking for from us, is to take the step of faith. Faith is believing in what you can't see. The reality of what doesn't exist.

This is what Abraham represents. This is where Abraham pleases God. Look at the example in Hebrews.

Look at the example in Romans. Look at the example in James, that the New Testament application is made of this episode. Abraham demonstrated his faith by his works.

People love to go to that in James and say, See, I have to demonstrate my faith by my works. Who did he demonstrate it to? Nobody on this earth. God himself.

That's who Abraham demonstrated his faith by his works toward. We seem to miss that detail a lot of times when people preach out of James and say, Well, you've got to get busy. You've got to serve.

You've got to make an impact. People have to know about your faith through your works. There wasn't a person anywhere near that mountain.

It was a three-day journey from civilization to get to that mountain. The servants were left far behind. Abraham demonstrated his faith by his works before God.

This is the arena where calling is exemplified. This is the place where we either obey or we don't. It's in the eyes of God.

When we examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith, this is what we want to look for. Why do we do what we do? How do we measure what we do? How do we measure our standing before God? Are we measuring it by whether or not we're having influence on a large number of people or a small number of people? It doesn't matter if there's anybody around at all because the victory of our faith is won in God's sight, in His presence, on top of Mount Moriah, where God sees, where God knows. This is why, Jesus, you can go to so many passages.

Your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. We want to and need to constantly remind ourselves that the battle that we fight is not against flesh and blood, and it's not observed in the realm of flesh and blood. It may and will have evidence in this earthly life and in contact with other people and in opportunities for ministry and service that are seen by others.

But the essence of the battle, the center of the battle, like Paul says, is not with flesh and blood. It's principalities and powers and rulers. It's a spiritual conflict, and that conflict takes place on the battlefield of your soul and my soul, and it's an unseen conflict.

We have to win that battle of what to do with what God gives us. Are we willing to take up our cross and follow? Are we willing to do the sacrificial thing? We live in such a plush environment these days that we think, well, we're never called upon to do that. Yes, we are.

It's in the unseen realm that we're called upon to do this. Are we willing to be, in our specific case, are we willing to be a small group? Are we willing to be a small church? When you're small, you don't have the opportunities to go out and influence as many people or support as many missionaries or engage in as many overt ministries or be heard by as many people or be touched and touch others in as great a way. And we think, well, this is unsatisfactory.

We need to do more. We need to do something different. We need to advertise.

We need to be larger. We need to expand. No, we don't.

What we need to do is remember where the battle is. As I said earlier, we stand on the border of an undiscovered country. I don't think there are very many of us as believers who recognize what God really is looking for.

God can raise up stones to cry out and witness. God can accomplish any ministry. God can supply any need from His riches in glory.

What God is looking for is someone like Abraham who, when nobody is looking, when nobody is watching, when it doesn't make a difference to anybody else to put our all on the altar. When we do that, look at the number of people that have been influenced because Abraham did this thing in secret, because Abraham did this and was faithful to God when no one was looking. All the nations of the earth bless themselves in Abraham.

The Messiah Himself is descended from Abraham and that all takes place because Abraham won that invisible battle, that daily need for putting God first and self-denial. That's what the sacrifice symbolizes. That's what the sprinkling of blood represents.

The ultimate sacrifice, Jesus Christ, did not think equality with God was a thing to be grasped. He emptied Himself. He took on the form of a servant.

He was obedient to death, even death on a cross. That's our calling. That's the hard thing.

Anybody can minister. Anybody can witness. Anybody can garner numbers.

My goodness, look at TV. Look at the lame things you can do and get a crowd. Anybody can do that.

But the uncharted country of inheritance lies before those who can see it with the eyes of faith and who recognize that it's a gift of God to those who put God first, who will do whatever it takes to be pleasing in God's sight. This is our opportunity. We don't need numbers.

We don't need notoriety. We don't need impact among people to do it. What we need is a clear focus on our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the example foreshadowed on Mount Moriah, foreshadowed in the Levitical offerings, foreshadowed throughout the Old Testament, especially in the book of Genesis, as the Lamb of God who, for the sake of God's plan, for the sake of others, denied Himself and took up His cross.

That's our calling, and that's our great opportunity. So don't, and I remind myself as much as I remind you all, don't be sucked into the idea that says, well, you're obscure. We sang that hymn that I love so much this morning, Our Best.

Our talents may be few. These may be small. The arena of our opportunities may seem very limited from a human point of view.

But we have the same opportunity as Abraham to seize and lay hold of the promise of God by faith. Abraham did this because he believed God. He drew the conclusion in his mind that if God was asking for Isaac and God had promised that all of the blessing in the future came through Isaac, God would have to give him back.

And Abraham lashed himself to that truth that was only real by faith. He said, God said

this. It has to be so.

If I sacrifice Isaac, God's going to have to give him back. The author of Hebrews points this out explicitly. Abraham knew that if he sacrificed Isaac, God would have to raise him because God's promise was real in Abraham's mind.

God's promises have to be real in our minds when it counts in the daily small decisions of life to be faithful as a parent, to be faithful as a spouse, to be faithful as a believer in the daily requirements of life to do the right thing and the honorable thing when no one is looking, when it doesn't seem like it really matters to remember that the eyes, we have that song, the eyes of Texas are upon you, the eyes of God are upon us day and night in the large and in the small decisions of life. And if we see that as our opportunity, if we recognize it as our calling, there are things unimaginable. Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, neither has entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for those who love him.

If your heart's desire is to be a blessing to others, if your heart's desire is to reflect the glory of God, this is the way. It's not running around looking for a way to get people to notice or to make a difference in the lives of people which is so prevalent as the measure. It is to measure up in the eyes of God, to be obedient and hearken to the voice of God when nobody but God is looking.

That's the great thing we find in this chapter. And the most emphatic expression of God's promise to Abraham comes on this occasion because it does matter. It's not an unconditional promise.

What God can do in and through you and I depends entirely on the extent to which we are willing to put our all on the altar. So it's such a great opportunity. It's so sad that in Christian circles today the emphasis is on the easy, the superficial, the humanly measured accomplishments and not on this great ability to be a channel for the grace of God, to be a reflection of the glory of God and to be fully self-sacrificial in the things of God.

This is our opportunity. And you can do it when you're washing the dishes. You can do it when you're caring for your child.

You can do it when you execute the functions of your job and your employment. In the small conversations, the seemingly insignificant words that you exchange with others, why do we say what we say? Why do we do what we do? It's a daily opportunity to stand on top of that mountain and say whatever it takes to be pleasing in God's sight. That's what I'm going to choose.

That's what I'm going to do. I just want to be pleasing in His sight. Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength

and my Redeemer.

Let's close in prayer. Father, we thank You that, as is so often the case and as expressed so many times in Your Word, it is not the mighty who are called. It is not the wise or the strong.

It is in weakness that Your strength is made manifest. It is in the secret places and in the small things that the greatest victories are won. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will remind us of that truth and remind us of our great opportunity, the great privilege that we have because we stand before You in the righteousness, in the sanctification that comes through Jesus Christ.

We have such a great calling and such a great opportunity in Your plan to accomplish Your purpose and to reflect Your glory. We pray that we will have eyes to see and ears to hear in the details of our daily lives to lay the sacrifice on the altar, to be willing to give the good things that You have given to us to risk whatever we initially think may be a risk knowing that the reality is in the fulfillment of Your promises. The reality is in the grace and the provision that You have made for us.

We pray that as a result our lives will be pleasing in Your sight and will reflect the glory of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray these things in His name. Amen.