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In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness.

- Genesis 1:1-4



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### Begin with God:

- His light is always shining
- His blessing is always flowing
- When we believe this
  - And live in this truth
    - It will show up in the whole of our lives
      - In our thinking
      - In our behaviour
      - In our speech



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### Begin with God:

- He is always at work in us
- By His Holy Spirit
- His light is shining on us
- His blessing is upon us
- To accomplish His will and His pleasure
- Which is all good
- We work out our salvation in that context



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### Begin with God:

- We know He is always working...
  - To reveal Himself and His ways
  - To strengthen us in every situation
  - To provide for us in every situation
  - To bring us through
  - To deliver us
  - To mature our faith
  - To transform us



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Now, it is also true that:

- The world is a tough place to live
- It became like that after the fall
- We will (and do) have trouble in this world
  - Even Jesus acknowledged that
  - And warned that it would continue to be that way
- But, that did not change God's intent or power to bless His people and to make them a blessing



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In the fall

- The temptation, "you will be like God," was
  - To begin with self – take matters into our own hands
  - To create our own blessings – pursuing what pleases us
  - To be our own light – deciding what is good and evil
- That mindset is still present everywhere
- If we are not discerning we are still easily influenced by it
- We need to have our minds renewed



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The world is a tough place

We begin with self

Both of these aspects of  
the fall raise challenges



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The world is a tough place

- Difficult to believe God wants to bless us
- Difficult to see His blessing
- Difficult to walk by faith
- Can find ourselves focussed on the mountains and shadows
- And not on the light



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## Begin with self

- Creeps into our doctrine
- Subtle belief that our actions bring blessing to our lives
- Being blessed depends on what we do
- Can produce striving
- Can produce guilt
- Can also produce false confidence – presumption
- Can lead to over-reaching our mandate & authority



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How should we approach God and  
understand His desire to bless us?



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What is the effect on 'doctrine' when we begin with self?

- We end up with a 'causal' approach to blessing
- I need to do something (take the initiative) in order to:
  - Be blessed by God
  - 'Cause' the blessings to come
  - Because God responds to what we do

An element of truth – there is a way that is pleasing to God



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What is the effect on doctrine when we begin with self?

- There are at least four versions of this:
  - Transactional
  - 'Self-help' approach
  - Entitlement
  - Experiential / Mystic



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### Transactional

- If I do the right thing God will bless me
- Blessing is earned – by implication 'deserved'
- A works approach which leads to
  - Legalism – striving
  - Guilt
  - Fear
- Can even be a bit superstitious

An element of truth – there is a part that is ours



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### 'Self-help' type of approach

- There are principles that we simply need to discover and do
- This will result in blessing being unlocked, released...
- Examples
  - Faith in faith (name it and claim it)
  - The power of our words (speak it into being, declare it)
- Still a works approach (striving, guilt and fear)
- Also leads to presumption – Pseudo-faith

An element of truth – there is way to walk in God's blessing



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### 'Self-help' type approach

- Can also be very superstitious
- Need to be careful not hinder blessing (or cause a 'curse'):
  - Saying the wrong thing
  - Doing the wrong thing
  - Failing to follow the right process

An element of truth – there is way to walk in God's blessing



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### Entitlement

- God is love and is there to bless me
  - He has to bless me – He has an 'obligation' to bless me
- He is like an ATM – it is just a matter of 'making a withdrawal':
  - We expect blessing because that is what He is there for
  - May even demand it – God is our 'sugar daddy'
- Also a place of presumption / pseudo-faith
- More often than not leads to immaturity and licentiousness

An element of truth – God's intent is to bless us





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## Experiential / Mystic

- We tap into / 'release' the flow of God's presence and power:
  - Through certain rituals, 'formulas' and experiences
  - Experiencing God is a major focus
  - Blessing is in the experience

Element of truth – there is a 'flow' of God's blessing



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As the mystic element increases there is an 'occultist' element

- "Pull heaven down to earth"
- Power of our words gets a 'mystic' spin
- Get 'special revelation' through special experiences of God

Element of truth – Our relationship with God is experiential



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### When we begin with self:

- We can 'miss' God's blessing
  - Just like we can miss His grace
- His blessing is always there
  - But we can miss it
- Beginning with ourselves is not the way to see that put right



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### Begin with God:

- In the beginning God...
- And God said...
- And God saw that it was good / very good...
  - All He created was blessed
- His intent in that blessing has never changed



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When we begin with God we see that:

- Blessing is what naturally comes from Him
- Blessing is His will and His intent before we ask
- He does not owe us blessing
- He is not obliged to bless us
- But He wants to bless us
- And sets us up to receive that



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When we begin with God we see that:

- We receive blessing:
  - In the context of a relationship with Him
  - Founded on grace and faith



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When we begin with God we see that:

- Because blessing is God's intent
- It is always something He takes the initiative with
- It is firstly a matter of grace
- We don't deserve it and can never deserve it



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When we begin with God we see that:

- We receive His blessing
  - By faith (the way that is pleasing to God)
  - Not by works



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When we begin with God we see that our part:

- Is responsive
  - Not causal
- God always initiates
- Our part is always a response to what He does and says
  - The way Jesus did
- The opposite of beginning with self



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When we begin with God we see that our part:

- Is relational
  - To know Him and His ways
  - Walk before Him and be blameless
    - To make sure our fellowship with Him is unhindered



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When we begin with God we see that our part has many descriptions:

- To Love Him
- To walk with Him
- Keep in step with the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:25)
- To abide in the Vine (John 15)
- To walk/live by faith and persist in faith (Heb 10:38, Jam 1:2-4)
- The Beatitudes (Mat 5:1-12)
- To seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness (Mat 6:33)
- Love one another – and all the ‘one anothers’



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When we begin with God we see that our part has many descriptions:

- Work out your salvation.... Because it is God who is at work in you... (Phil 2:12-16)
- Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice and be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Rom 12:1-2)
- Make every effort to add to your faith.... (2Pet 1:3-11)
- Strive to enter His rest... (Heb 4:1-11)
- Be overcomers (Rev 1 & 2)
- ‘Perfect’ holiness in the fear of God (2Cor 7:1)
- .....



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When we begin with God we understand why our part:

- Includes some warnings
  - Don't grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30)
  - Don't have a sinful, unbelieving heart (Heb 3:12-19)
  - Don't only be a hearer of His Word (Mat 7:24-27, Jam 1:22-25)
  - In the 'one anothers'
  - Watch out for our enemies – sin and satan
  - Don't be lovers of the world (1Jn 2:15-17)
  - Don't conform to the ways of the world (Rom 12:1-2)
  - .....



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God's blessing also has many descriptions:

- Salvation (are, are being and will be...)
- The promise of the Father – the Holy Spirit
- Righteousness (right standing) – reconciliation / fellowship with God
- Righteousness (ability for right doing) – the fruit of the Spirit
- Able to enter His rest... (Heb 4:1-11)
- Can be overcomers (Rev 1 & 2)
- 'See' / inherit His Kingdom – experience it's power and benefits in this world. Righteousness, peace, joy... in the Holy Spirit
- Eternal rewards
- Confidence to enter the holy places



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God's blessing also has many descriptions:

- Not being separated from God's love, by anything, ever....
- Adoption – sons and daughters of God, co-heirs with Christ
- Continually filled with the Holy Spirit – Rivers of living water flowing from our inmost being
- Being strengthened in our innermost being
- Able to bear abundant fruit – fruit that endures
- Prayer – we have the ear of the Father
- Provision – according to God's wisdom, grace and goodness
- BE A BLESSING



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Picture God's blessing like a river

- Wherever the river flows there is blessing (Ezk 47, Rev 22)
- When we are in the river and the river flows in us we are in God's blessing
- When we walk away from the river, we are no longer in His blessing – at least not directly
- He has given us everything we need to walk in His ways
- He works in us, through the Holy Spirit to help us do that
- Our part is to walk in that way, with Him, led and empowered by the Holy Spirit





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The LORD bless you and keep you;

the LORD make his face to shine upon you and  
be gracious to you;

the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and  
give you peace.

Numbers 6:24-26