**Our Response to God’s Blessings**

***17****After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).****18****And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.)****19****And he blessed him and said,*

*“Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
    Possessor of heaven and earth;****20****and blessed be God Most High,
    who has delivered your enemies into your hand!”*

*And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.****21****And the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself.”****22****But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have lifted my hand to the Lord, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth,****23****that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’****24****I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me. Let Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre take their share.” (Genesis 14:17-24, ESV)*

 When God blesses us, let our response to Him be guided by faith.

Greetings in the Lord as we get back to talking about foundational matters of faith from the Old Testament, specifically about Abraham’s faith journey. Often, we notice that God has blessed us – and our responses and attitudes toward those blessings decide the trajectory of the road ahead for each of us. Thus, we’re going to talk about how to approach God’s blessings today. Again, I want to stress that we are called to approach life’s ups and downs with faith, if we want to see God’s blessings continue both for us and our children’s generation. Let’s look at this issue from the lens of the Scripture reading…

 In life’s victories, we are called to be like Abraham and experience them with a faith-based approach. The passage picks up after a military victory for Abram. Two figures appear in the text, as if they were two paths of life. The first path is represented by Melchizedek. Just by his name, it is clear that he is a righteous man. His name is made up of the words for “king” and “righteous”. He was the king of Salem, which is just short for Jerusalem. He brought wine and bread, which were main items tied to the worship of God in that day, to worship along with Abram. He blessed Abram, but especially God, calling Him the Lord of all things. Additionally, He called Him a victory-causing God, since He was the one who gave Abram the victory. He gave all the glory to God, and his focus was on glorifying God (and not himself or Abram). The second path, represented by the second figure, was that of the king of Sodom. He made an offer to Abram in a purely business-focused manner. His focus was on the material-financial reality after the victory, and also on his own personal gain. In fact, his behavior was a cause for Abram to reject his offer with an emphatic oath! In other words, Abram was giving God the glory for his military victory and showing that it was not right to give a man the credit when he was not deserving of it. Abram had approached the military victory with spiritual eyes. Melchizedek had encouraged that faith to grow in Abram. On the other hand, the king of Sodom was looking at the whole situation with a wrong heart – instead of encouraging a faith-filled approach, he was preoccupied with business.

 Martin Luther once said, “God our Father made everything depend on faith, so that whoever has faith has everything, and whoever does not have faith has nothing.”

 The lesson to be learned is important: in life’s victories, it is necessary that we act in faith like Abraham did in his victorious moments. It is not just needed in our successes, however, but in every situation – notice that Abram was able to see the wrong approach in the king of Sodom. Contrary to that, he was encouraged by Melchizedek’s faith-filled conversation.

 So, what about us? Where are we in this picture? What comes first for us in such a situation? When we are in front of a major decision, which is priority – the immediate material solution, or the greater spiritual one?

 Our decisions can even affect our coming generations. If one of us goes to work and performs righteously all their life, that leaves a great impact on the kids, seeing that faithfulness and uprightness. On the other hand, if someone has an unstable and deceptive approach to life’s ups and downs, what will his or her kids do in that unstable and unhealthy atmosphere? In the latter case, the hope would have to be that there would be at least someone else in the family that would make decisions based on God’s standards.

 My prayer is that when we find ourselves at important crossroads with decisions to be made, that we would make ones informed by our faith, and not focused on financial gain or pleasure. May the Lord give us the spirit of discernment to do what is right in those situations according to His standards.

 May the Lord bless you all. Amen.