

INTRODUCTION 引言

This Saturday will be the first day of the Chinese New Year. It is a time of celebration, even though there is not much festivity in this city. When I was a kid, mom would cook special food during this time of the year. I had no idea when she bought the ingredients and when she prepared them. Those dishes just appeared on the dining table like gifts popped up under a Christmas tree. Besides food, some parents will buy new clothes and new shoes for their children. Of course, what kids love the most are red-envelopes. Even American-born youngsters know how to ask for them. They will greet older folks by saying: “Wish you wealthy! Give me money!” It is a tradition to wish each other good fortune during the Chinese New Year. We hope people will be richer and healthier, and have better grades or career. It is encouraging to receiving blessings. The passage today is about God’s blessings to people. At that time, the Israelites were about to enter Canaan after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. Their ancestors were slaves in Egypt for over 400 years. God wanted to bless His people after they took possession of the Promised Land. While they were about to enjoy a good life, they should not forget where those blessings came from. The same reminder is for us Christians. God blesses us first, and we should remember to bless Him back.

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. The Content of God’s Blessings 神祝福的內容

Let us first consider the content of God’s blessings. I will highlight four of them from this passage. I wish the same blessings will come to you.

A. Productivity 萬事如意

First, I hope that God will bless you with productivity in all you do. Look again at verse 4: **“Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock.”** The Israelites lived in an agricultural society several thousand years ago. Having more children means more manpower. That would bring in a bigger harvest. Animals are the source of milk and fur. They can also be used to exchange other goods. Besides, animals were offered as sacrifices to God. We have a very different life today. However, we still work with our heads and our hands to generate wealth. We do not raise livestock but some people invest in stocks. Most people do not keep cows and sheep but they may have dogs and cats. Married couples make plans on how many kids to have. Based on the Bible, children are blessings and not burdens. Children add much joy to families. People look forward to the warm atmosphere and noise when family gathers in holidays and for celebrations. Family, wealth and everything else are God’s blessings. Give thanks to Him when you enjoy productivity.

B. Safety 出入平安

Second, I wish that God will bless you with safety. Read verse 6: **“Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.”** Back then people relied on themselves to ensure safety. That was another benefit for having a large family. For example, in Genesis Abraham sent a team of strong men to rescue Lot when he heard that his nephew was kidnapped by some raiders. Also, people traveled with companions to watch over each other. The scene in the parable of the Good Samaritan was common. Bad guys were ready to prey on people. Today, we have concerns about the rising crime rate. We stay alert when going out. We remain at home after dark. Robbers may not steal from your wallet but they steal from your bank accounts. Scammers often come up with new tricks to cheat us. Besides thieves, we need to be aware of aggressive drivers. Some people treat speed limits as suggestions. Running red light is notorious in our city. Needless to say, we live in an unsafe world. We lock our doors and we are careful as we go out. But we should not be overcome by fear. Ultimately, we put our trust in the Lord. He will grant us safety no matter where we are. We travel with peace and we sleep soundly at night.

C. Stability 風調雨順

Next, I pray that God will bless you with stability in the weather. Moses says in the first half of verse 12: **“The Lord will open to you his good treasury, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hands...”** God promised His people to send them rain at the right time. Remember that Israel is in a desert region in the Middle East. At that time, farmers must rely on rain to water their crops. People and animals need water to survive too. A prolonged drought can easily lead to a famine. Modern people are so used to having clean water when they turn on the faucet, until the source is interrupted. Many of you had to boil water before drinking it two weeks ago. Some people in smaller towns could not even get water because their pipes burst under frozen temperature. Besides drinking, we need water for cooking and cleaning. Businesses and industries depend on water too. A little disruption in water supply should humble us. We pay the city government for water. But ultimately, water comes from God. We should give thanks to Him for such a basic need in life.

D. Prosperity 財源廣進

With everything working in harmony, I wish that God will bless you with prosperity. Listen to the second half of verse 12: **“...And you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow.”** Money and materials are God’s blessings. You can lend to others only when you have excess. It is a simple way to make a profit since Biblical times. Today, we put money in a bank or use it to buy some valuable assets. God blesses us with prosperity. Having money is not a bad thing, but hoarding money is. It can easily lead to greed, stinginess and selfishness. We should keep in mind that God gives us the ability to make money. He blesses you a good health to work, intelligence to make wise decisions, opportunities to invest and a sound finance and justice system to protect your wealth. Give thanks to God for what you have. It is a good thing to enjoy the fruit of your labor. You should not feel guilty to take your family to a nice dinner or to go on a fancy vacation. Another two Biblical principles to keep in mind are contentment and generosity. Be satisfied with all that God blesses you with, and be willing to share your resources with those who are in need. God blesses us first so that we can in turn bless others.

2. The Conditions for God’s Blessings 神祝福的條件

We said all along that God is the source of all blessings. Those benefits are the results of a healthy relationship with God. After we studied the content of God's blessings let us look at the conditions for God's blessings. There are four things the Israelites and we must keep in mind.

A. Receive God's Words 接受神的話語

First, they had to receive God's words. Verse 1 says **“And if you faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God...”** then God would bless them. The phrase “obey the voice” literally means “hear the sound.” We tell little kids to listen to their parents and teachers. They prove to be good listeners if they do accordingly. The Israelites had to do the same thing. God spoke through Moses in this book. Moses words were authoritative because they came from God. We look for an expert when we need advice on health, finance, academic and career. We follow their instructions if we trust their words. We should have the same attitude when we study God's Word. The authority does not come from the Bible authors or any teacher. It comes from God, the source of all truths. Certainly, people may misinterpret a passage. We must listen with discernment. However, we will miss a lot if we shut our ears and conclude: “Nah, that's just the leader's personal opinions.” God's truth is crucial to our life. It is not some optional suggestions for us to pick and choose. If you desire God's blessings, then you must receive God's words first.

B. Remember God's Commands 記住神的命令

Besides receiving God's words, the Israelites must also remember His commands. Moses told them in verse 9 to **“...keep the commandments of the Lord your God...”** The Hebrew word for “keep” means to protect. The Israelites had to protect God's commands in their mind like a treasure. They sinned against God whenever they forgot His teaching. God gave them manna as a food in the wilderness. Manna was like plant seeds. God told His people not to store up extra manna. They did not listen. The manna turned bad overnight. God asked them to stock up another portion on Fridays because they must rest on the Sabbaths. Some people went out to the field on the Sabbath anyway, but they found nothing. The Israelites committed major sins later when they failed to remember God's commands. God then disciplined them. It does not matter how much Bible we read and study. The more important thing is how much we remember. God's Word will strengthen our faith. The Lord promises to never leave us nor forsake us. God will supply all that we need according to His riches in glory. He will also give us wisdom when we ask Him. God's peace will guard our hearts when we remember His commands.

C. Repeat God's Instructions 重複神的吩咐

Thirdly, the Israelites must also repeat God's instructions. Moses told them twice in verses 1 and 13 that they had to be **“careful to do all his commandments.”** They would be blessed if they repeated what He said. God laid out the contrasting outcomes when they obeyed and disobeyed. In the second half of this chapter, Moses told the Israelites all the curses that would come to them if they rebelled against God. Those curses are simply the reverse of God's blessings. For example, rain will become a drought, abundance will turn into poverty, peaceful living in the homeland compared to slavery in a foreign country. Unfortunately, those curses all came true later. The Bible records God's discipline to His people so that we can gain wisdom from their

failures. We should repeat God's instructions and not repeat their ignorance. Jesus told us to seek God's Kingdom and righteousness first and not to worry about tomorrow. He asks us to store up treasures in heaven and not on earth. The Bible also tells us to cast our burdens on God. He wants us to experience His faithfulness. God will do what He says when we do all that He says.

D. Resolve to Follow God 決心與神同行

The Israelites must receive God's words, remember His commands and repeat His instructions. Lastly, they had to resolve in their hearts to follow God. Moses urges them in verse 9 to "walk in his ways." The picture is to stay on a course in order to reach a destination. God's people must resolve to obey Him wholeheartedly. Given time, godly choices will become good habits. Henceforth, good habits will form a noble character. We became believers when we committed our lives to Jesus. We must resolve to follow Him in any situation. Selectively obedience is not obedience at all. We should follow God's instructions in our career and finance, in our family life and parenting. We treat fellow Christians and non-believers alike with kindness. We obey God in the church and the rest of the week outside of the church. If obedience to the Lord becomes our goal, then God's blessings will be a natural consequence. In another words, we should not worry that God will not bless us if we resolve to put Him first. If we truly love God, then we will love to listen to Him. Following God should be one-way street. There is no turning back.

CONCLUSION 結論

God blesses us first, and we should remember to bless Him back. We should not only focus on God's blessings but ignore the God who blesses us. We should not only want God's presents but does not want His presence in our life. God made the Israelites His own people. This close relationship is the basis for His blessings. God also settled them in Canaan and gave them rest. All those benefits point to the blessings we have in Jesus Christ. He saved us from our sins and restored our relationship as God's children. We also have peace through Jesus when we are reconciled with the Father. God's blessings to us are both physical and spiritual. In this Chinese New Year, I wish you all the blessings from God. In particular, I wish you the blessing of eternal life.

INTRODUCTION 引言

這週六將是農曆新年的第一天。這是一個慶祝的時刻，儘管這座城市沒有太多的節日氣氛。在我小時候，每年到了這個季節媽媽都會做一些特別的食物。我不知道她什麼時候買那些材料，也不曉得她是什麼時候準備的。那些菜就像聖誕樹下突然出現的禮物一樣出現在餐桌上。除了食物之外，有些家長還會買新衣服、新鞋子給兒女。當然，孩子們最喜歡的就是拿紅包。連在美國出生的年輕人也知道怎樣要紅包。他們會祝賀長輩：「恭喜發財！紅包拿來！」過年時互相祝賀是一種傳統。我們希望人們更加富有、更健康、有更好的學業或事業。接受祝福是令人鼓舞的。今天的經文是關於神對人的祝福。當時，以色列人經過四十年的曠野漂流，即將進入迦南。他們的祖先在埃及當了四百多年的奴隸。神希望在祂的子民進入應許之地後祝福他們。當他們即將享受美好生活的時候，他們不應該忘記這些祝福的源頭。同樣的提醒也適用於我們基督徒。神首先祝福我們，我們也應該記得感謝祂。

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. The Content of God's Blessings 神祝福的內容

我們先來看神祝福的內容。我們會集中看四個重點。期望同樣的祝福也臨到你。

A. Productivity 萬事如意

首先，我希望神祝福你萬事如意。請再看第 4 節：「**你身所生的，地所產的，牲畜所下的，以及牛犢、羊羔，都必蒙福。**」幾千年前，以色列人生活在農業社會。擁更多的孩子意味著更多的人力。這樣便會有更大的農產收穫。動物是牛奶和皮毛的來源。牠們也可以用來交換其他貨物。此外，動物也被用作祭品獻給神。今天我們的生活非常不同。然而，我們仍然用頭腦和雙手來創造財富。我們不會養牲畜，但有些人投資股票。大多數人不會養牛和羊，但可能養狗和貓。已婚夫婦會計劃要生幾個孩子。根據聖經，孩子是祝福而不是負擔。孩子們為家庭增添了許多歡樂。人們期待過節和慶祝活動時家人團聚的溫馨氣氛和熱鬧聲音。家庭、財富和其他一切都是神的祝福。當你萬事如意時，要感謝神。

B. Safety 出入平安

第二，願神保守你出入平安。請讀第 6 節：「**你出也蒙福，人也蒙福。**」那時，人們依靠自己來確保安全。這是擁有一個大家庭的另一個好處。例如，在創世記中，

亞伯拉罕聽說他的侄子羅得被土匪綁架了，於是他便派一隊壯丁去營救。此外，人們會結伴出遠門，在路上互相照應。好撒瑪利亞人比喻中的場景很常見。壞人隨時準備好要打劫別人。今天，我們對不斷上升的犯罪率感到擔憂。我們外出時保持警惕。天黑後我們留在家裡。壞人不一定會偷你的錢包，他們可能會偷你的銀行帳戶。詐騙的人經常想出新伎倆來欺騙我們。除了提防小偷之外，我們還需要注意開車勇猛的司機。有些人將速度限制視為建議。在我們這個城市，闖紅燈是臭名昭著的。很顯然，我們生活在一個不安全的世界。我們鎖好門，出門時也很小心。但我們不應該被恐懼所戰勝。最終，我們相信主。無論我們身在何處，祂都會賜給我們平安。我們出門時心中充滿平安，晚上睡得香甜。

C. Stability 風調雨順

接下來，求神祝福你風調雨順。摩西在第 12 節的前半部份說：「**耶和華必為你開天上的府庫，按時降雨在你的地上。在你手裏所辦的一切事上賜福與你...**。」神應許祂的子民在適當的時候賜給他們雨水。請記住，以色列位於中東的沙漠地帶。那時，農民必須依靠雨水來澆灌農作物。人和動物也需要水才能生存。長期乾旱容易導致飢荒。現代人已經習慣了打開水龍頭便有乾淨的水，直到水源被中斷。兩週前，許多人必須先將水煮沸才能飲用。一些住在小鎮的人甚至缺水，因為一些水管在冰凍溫度下爆裂。除了飲用之外，我們還需要水來煮飯和清潔。企業和工業也依賴水。暫停供水的一點點不方便應該使我們謙卑下來。我們交水費給市政府。但最終，水是來自神。我們應該為這樣一個基本的生活需要而感謝祂。

D. Prosperity 財源廣進

當一切事情都順利時，願神也祝福你財源廣進。請看第 12 節的後半部分：「**...你必借給許多國民，卻不致向他們借貸。**」金錢和物質都是神的祝福。只有當你有剩餘的時候，你才有能力借給別人。自聖經時代以來，借貸是一種簡單的賺錢方式。今天，我們把錢存入銀行或是購買一些資產。神祝福我們財源廣進。金錢不是壞事，但囤積金錢才是壞事。它很容易導致貪心、吝嗇和自私。我們必須記住，是神賜給我們謀生的能力。祂祝福你，使你有健康的身體去工作、做出明智決策的智慧、投資的機會以及保護你財富的健全金融和司法制度。為你所擁有的感謝神。享受自己勞碌的成果是件好事。當你帶家人去吃頓豐盛的晚餐或去度個愉快的假期時，你不應該有罪惡感。另外兩個需要牢記的聖經原則是知足和慷慨。你應該滿足於神賜給你的一切，並願意與有需要的人分享你的資源。神首先祝福我們，使我們能祝福別人。

2. The Conditions for God's Blessings 神祝福的條件

我們一直說神是所有祝福的源頭。這些好處是與神建立健康關係的結果。我們討論完神祝福的內容後，我們再來看看神祝福的條件。有四件事情是以色列人和我們都必須記住的。

A. Receive God's Words 接受神的話語

首先，他們必須接受神的話語。第 1 節說：「你若留意聽從耶和華—你神的話...」那麼神就會賜福給他們。我們教導小孩子要聽父母和老師的話。如果他們照著去做的話，就證明他們是很好的聆聽者。以色列人也必須做同樣的事情。神透過摩西在這卷書中說話。摩西的話帶著權柄，因為那些信息是來自神。當我們需要健康、財務、學術和職業的建議時，我們會尋找專家。如果我們相信他們的話，我們就會遵循他們的指示。當我們學習神的話語時，我們也應該有同樣的態度。聖經作者或任何老師的話沒有權柄。權柄是來自神，祂是所有真理的源頭。當然，人或許會錯解一段經文。我們必須以明辨的心去傾聽。然而，如果我們閉上耳朵並得出結論說：「這只是帶領者的個人意見而已」，我們就會錯過很多。神的真理對我們的生活至關重要。它不是一些可供我們選擇的建議。你若想得到神的祝福，就必須先接受祂的話。

B. Remember God's Commands 記住神的命令

除了接受神的話語之外，以色列人還必須記住神的命令。摩西在第 9 節告訴他們要「...謹守耶和華—你神的誡命...」。希伯來文的「謹守」意思是保護。以色列人必須將神的命令當作珍寶一樣存記在心。每當他們忘記神的教導時，他們就得罪神。神在曠野賜他們嗎哪作為食物。嗎哪就像植物的種子。神告訴祂的子民不要儲存剩餘的嗎哪。他們不聽。嗎哪一夜之間就變壞了。神要求他們在星期五多收集一份，因為他們必須在安息日休息。有些人在安息日照樣到野地去，但他們什麼也沒找到。以色列人後來因為忘記神的命令而犯了更嚴重的罪，因此神管教他們。對我們來說，讀多少聖經、查考多少聖經並不是最重要。關鍵的是我們記住了多少。神的話語會增加我們的信心。主應許永遠不會離開我們，也不會撇棄我們。神也會按照祂榮耀的豐富供應我們所需要的一切。當我們向神祈求時，祂便賜給我們智慧。當我們要記住神的話語時，祂的平安會保守我們的心。

C. Repeat God's Instructions 重複神的吩咐

第三，以色列人也必須重複神的吩咐。摩西在第 1 節和第 13 節中兩次告訴他們，他們必須「謹守遵行他一切的誡命」。如果他們重複神所說的話，他們就會得到祝福。神列出了截然不同的結果，對比他們的順服與不順服。在本章的後半部分，摩西告訴以色列人他們背叛神之時將受到的所有咒詛。這些咒詛是神的祝福的逆轉。例如，雨水會變成乾旱，富裕會變成貧窮，在家鄉過著平靜的生活變成在異國被奴

役。不幸的是，這些詛咒後來都成真了。聖經記錄了神對祂子民的管教，好讓我們能從他們的失敗中獲得智慧。我們應該重複神的吩咐，而不是重複他們的無知。耶穌告訴我們要先尋求神的國和神的義，不要為明天憂慮。祂要求我們把財寶積攢在天上而不是地上。聖經也告訴我們要把重擔卸給神。祂希望我們經歷祂的信實。如果我們按神所說的一切去行時，祂就會按祂所說的去行。

D. Resolve to Follow God 決心與神同行

以色列人必須接受神的話語，記住神的命令，重複神的吩咐。最後，他們必須決心與神同行。摩西在第 9 節敦促他們「**遵行他的道**」。那幅圖畫是為了到達目的地而維持在正路上。神的子民必須決心完全順服祂。假以時日，敬虔的選擇就會變成好習慣。從此，良好的習慣就會形成高尚的品格。當我們將自己的生命交託給耶穌時，我們就成為了信徒。我們必須決心在任何情況下都與祂同行。選擇性的順服根本不是順服。我們應該在事業、財務、家庭生活和教養子女各方面都遵循神的吩咐。我們對基督徒和非信徒都友善。我們在教會裡聽從神，而在一週的其餘時間裡，我們在教會外面也聽服神。如果順服主成為我們的目標，那麼神的祝福就自然而然地發生了。換句話說，如果我們決心把神放在生命的首位，我們就不必擔心神不會祝福我們。如果我們真的愛神，我們就會樂意聽從祂。跟隨神應該是單行道。沒有回頭路。

CONCLUSION 結論

神首先祝福我們，我們也應該記得感謝祂。我們不該只注重神的祝福，卻忽略了祝福我們的神。我們不應該只想得到神的禮物，卻不想要祂的同在。神使以色列人成為自己的子民。這種密切的關係是祂祝福的基礎。神也讓他們定居在迦南地，使他們得安息。所有這些好處都指向我們在耶穌基督裡所擁有的祝福。祂將我們從罪中拯救出來，並恢復了我們作為神兒女的關係。當我們與天父和好時，我們也可以透過耶穌獲得平安。神對我們的祝福既有物質上的，也有屬靈上的。在這新的一年裡，我期望你們得到神的一切祝福。我特別盼望你得到永生的祝福。