

IDOLS

INTRODUCTION

We have been blessed for about two months now, having no load shedding, but the memories of the chaos it causes are still fresh in our minds:

- Traffic gridlock – hours in the car to travel short distances.
- Supper woes – or shall I call it “takeout time”.
- Trying to manage in the dark....

Load shedding can be a real blockage to progress! It impacts everyone, it impacts our economy, and it makes life difficult.

There are things in our lives that have the same impact in the spirit. God wants to bless us with the most immeasurable blessings but sometimes the choices we make, just like those that this country made with our electricity management, can cause become a serious hindrance to our progress as children of the Lord.

- Today we will have a look at some of the blessings God wants to give us as His children.
- We will look at what can cause a blockage to receiving those blessings.
- We will deal with those blockages.

MESSAGE

South Africa is in serious trouble. We are in the midst of a drought. In KZN there are towns without water. In Gauteng, they have pumped water out of the Vaal dam to deeper dams where it won't evaporate so quickly. One news report states this: “South Africa is facing its worst drought since 1982, with more than 2.7-million households facing water shortages across the country”.

I personally am quite concerned... this impacts everything – without water, there are no crops, people starve, costs skyrocket and the economy is hit hard.

With this in mind, I read the following scripture in Exodus which became the inspiration for this message:

EVERYTHING WE NEED

Exodus 23:25-26 (NLT) “You must serve only the Lord your God. If you do, I will bless you with food and water, and I will protect you from illness. 26 There will be no miscarriages or infertility in your land, and I will give you long, full lives.

- God will bless us with food and water.
- He will protect us from illness,

- He will protect us from barrenness (both physical and spiritual).
- He will give us long, full lives.

Jesus said much the same: **Matthew 6:31 & 33** (NLT) 31 "So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?'" 33 Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need.

- He will feed us.
- He will give us what we need to drink.
- He will clothe us.
- **He will give us everything we need!**

This is just what we need! He will give us food and water. God has the answer to this physical drought we are facing.

Not only that but he has promised to clothe us – He is our Provider, and He has promised to heal us – He is our Healer and He also promised long, full lives – this speaks of continued wellbeing!

He has promised us in both the old, and the New Testaments that we don't need to worry or be anxious. **We need to seriously pray that God will break this drought and be our provider and give us the health we need!**

But there is a condition...

WHEN WE SERVE GOD ONLY...

Exodus 23:25-26 (NLT) "You must serve only the Lord your God. If you do, I will bless you..."

Matthew 6:33 (NLT) Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need.

That's a big if! If you **serve ONLY the LORD** your God!
In Jesus words He said "**Seek the Kingdom of God above all else**".

We can pray as much as we like, but God is a just God and He will not let us get away with half measures – it's when we put God first and seek His Kingdom first and above all else, that the breakthrough will come!
When we put God first. He will bless us by looking after everything else.

IDOLS

Our problem, the blockage or load-shedding problems in our lives come when we don't put God first! We so easily get distracted and put things before God, effectively **making those things our idols**.

- If we want water, we need to identify the areas where there are idols in our lives.
- If we want to progress spiritually, we need to ask the Holy Spirit to show us where Jesus is not Lord in our lives.

In Mark 10:17-22 we read the account of the man who came to Jesus saying "what must I do to get saved?" He had religiously obeyed the Ten Commandments, but now Jesus has to point out the idol in his life:

Mark 10:21-22 (NLT) Looking at the man, Jesus felt genuine love for him. "There is still one thing you haven't done," He told him. "Go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." 22 At this the man's face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

Did you see what that man did? **He made a choice** – he was sad but...**HE WENT AWAY!**

The idols in our lives can take many forms and God wants us to deal with them. **He wants us to serve Him only and seek His Kingdom above all!**

- Our work, our children, our hobbies or sports, money, TV or any area in our lives where we place something before God.
- Some less obvious ones:
 - Our church.
 - Subtle disagreements with the Word of God (where we don't like what it says so we do our own thing anyway).
 - Even sickness – we are so busy dealing with our health issues that we take our eyes off God and look at doctors, stop coming to church and even start questioning God.

Let's take a moment to think about the idols in our lives – God wants to deal with these today!

DO WE REALLY MEAN IT?

Sometimes God shows us what idols to deal with and we make a commitment to serve Him only, but we don't let go properly.

Genesis 35:1-4 (NKJV) Then God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother." 2 And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. 3 Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone." 4 So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hands, and the earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which was by Shechem.

Jacob did two strange things here:

- He said "Put away the foreign gods that are among you".
- Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which was by Shechem.
- Why did he not say "destroy the foreign gods that are among you"?
- Why did he hide them under a tree?

Because they wanted to be able to go and get them again!

God was incredibly patient, but we know that the Israelites continually struggled with serving the foreign gods and idols of the people that lived around them – It was a terrible downfall and led to God allowing them to be driven out of the Promised Land and taken into captivity.

How different would the outcome have been if Jacob and those with him had destroyed the idols on that day?

- *What idols are there hidden under the terebinth trees in our lives?*
- *How many more times are we going to come before God, purify ourselves and then after a period of time go back and dig up those same idols that God freed us from before?*

And then we question God, wondering why He doesn't answer our cries for water, food, clothing, healing and long life!

JEHOVAH-NISSI

Exodus 17:15 (NLT) Moses built an altar there and named it Yahweh-Nissi (which means "the Lord is my banner").

The Israelites had just defeated the Amalekites. Moses watched the battle from the top of a nearby hill. As long as he had his arms up with his staff raised, the Israelites had the advantage, but when Moses hands were down, the Amalekites had the advantage. In this act, Moses experienced God as his banner.

Jesus Christ is the Lord our banner. He was raised up on a wooden cross on our behalf. As long as we keep our eyes on Him, we will always have a spiritual advantage over the enemy, but the moment we look away, the enemy will gain ground... Let us therefore keep our eyes firmly fixed on Jesus, He is the One who will guarantee our victory.

This morning God is calling us back to Him, He wants our eyes firmly set on Jesus Christ, the one lifted up on our behalf – HE is the Bread of Life, He is the Living Water! He is Jehovah Nissi, our Banner!

CONCLUSION

God has amazing blessings which He wants to give us as His children

- God will bless us with food and water.
- He will protect us from illness,
- He will protect us from barrenness (both physical and spiritual).
- He will give us long, full lives.
- He will clothe us.
- **He will give us everything we need!**

But... there is a condition and if we don't comply, it results in blockages to receiving those blessings.

- There are idols in our lives and God wants us to deal with them.
- He wants us to serve Him only and seek His Kingdom above all!

We need to deal with those blockages:

- What idols are there hidden under the terebinth trees in our lives?
- We need to come before God, purify ourselves and then not go back and dig up those same idols that God freed us from before.

Let us ask the Lord to make us free, once, and for all, from the idols in our lives, keeping our eyes upon Jesus, never looking away and giving the enemy ground.