

Sunday, February 27, 2022 pm

When Blessings Become a Curse Deuteronomy 30:19

This year, our theme is Drawing Closer to God. It is such a rich theme and worthy of great consideration, as it has a bearing on how strong our faith is, how brightly we let our light shine and how God will view us, both now and as we stand before Him facing eternity. A few weeks ago, I presented a lesson addressing how God blesses us. I believe that is a key element of understanding our relationship with Him. In one of my online studies with some fellow preachers, we were given an outline associated with the subject of God's blessings. I believe this is a lesson that will complement this subject and our theme for this year. So tonight, I would like to talk about when blessings become a curse.

In Deuteronomy 30, we find the farewell address of Moses to Israel as they prepare to enter the Promised Land. They have been in the wilderness for 40 years, Moses is about to die and Joshua is to take the reins of leadership as they conquer the land. He has told them of the promises of God to bless them if they are faithful and the curses of God they would face if they disobeyed Him and followed after idols (Deuteronomy 28). This is powerful language. Chapter 29 finds Israel renewing the covenant (1-15) and warnings if they abandon the covenant (16-29). Then in Deuteronomy 30 he addresses what will happen when and if they return to the LORD – He will forgive them. That leads to our text, Deuteronomy 30:11-20. Let us read this and notice vs. 19. Moses admonishes them to “choose life” and be blessed.

A study of Israel's history shows that God abundantly blessed them at the outset. And He continued to bless them, though they were often unfaithful to Him. When they repented and returned, He took them back over and over again. But what caused them to continually turn against God? They had been SO abundantly blessed by Him., but it seems it was never enough. God's blessings became a curse. Tonight, lets talk about when blessings become a curse.

I. Some Biblical examples

- a. **Adam and Eve** – God had abundantly blessed them in the garden.
 - i. They had access to a perfect environment, with plenty of food and they were safe. We are told that there was only ONE tree they could not eat of – the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16-17).
 - ii. Yet in spite of all their blessings, they took God for granted and did the ONE thing they told Him not to do. Their blessings became a curse.
 - iii. Genesis 3:17-19 even described the ground as cursed.
 - iv. Romans 8:20-22 speaks of creation begin subjected to futility, described as being in “the bondage of corruption” and a creation that “groans and labors in birth pangs until now.”
 - v. Much of the grief we face in the world today is the product of their sinful decision on that day.
 - vi. In this you see how a great a curse can be when we choose to reject God's will
- b. **The bronze serpent** –
 - i. Numbers 21:4-9 – In the wilderness, Israel (again) complained against God and Moses. The LORD send fiery serpents that caused many to die. The people came to Moses acknowledging their sins and asking for God's deliverance. Moses was instructed to make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole in the midst of the camp. When people were bitten, if they looked upon that serpent they would live. And so it was.
 - ii. This serpent was a blessing to those bitten who by faith were willing to trust God enough to look at it and be healed. In John 3:14-15, Jesus would use the illustration of this bronze

serpent as an analogy of how His death would provide the ULTIMATE blessing to us. Jesus would be lifted up and draw all men to Himself.

- iii. 2 Kings 18:1-4 records a time some 750 years later we read of a righteous king, Hezekiah, who seeks to cleanse Judah of its idolatry, removes the high places and destroys the bronze serpent that had become an idol to them. What was originally a blessing, had become a curse, giving God cause to turn against them and punish them severely.
- iv. How many take good things, BLESSINGS, and misuse them bringing upon themselves condemnation?

c. **Solomon** –

- i. Another great example of this is found in Solomon.
- ii. As Solomon begins his reign, because of the faithfulness of his father David, the LORD appears to him at Gibeon and offers to give him anything he wants. Solomon, humbly asks for wisdom to lead the people. 1 Kings 3:9-13 records the LORD blessing Solomon abundantly, not only with wisdom, but also wealth and great power and honor. Solomon was VERY powerful in that region because of God's blessings.
- iii. BUT, sadly, Solomon's heart turned from the LORD and he began serving idols (1 Kings 11:1-4). This brought a curse upon him and Judah. As a result of his sins, much of the kingdom of Israel (except the tribe of Judah) would be taken from his son (11:11-13). It happened. God's blessings, MISMANAGED, became a curse.

d. **Jeroboam** –

- i. After the death of Solomon, Rehoboam his son reigns. But much of Israel has been burdened by Solomon's oppressive rule (called burdensome service and a heavy yoke – 1 Kn. 12:4) and under the direction of Jeroboam come asking for Rehoboam to lighten that load. After consulting his youthful companions, he rejects it. Israel rebels and the divided kingdom begins.
- ii. Jeroboam reigns over northern Israel. His reign began as a blessing. In fact, 1 Kings 11:29-39 records the prophet Ahijah coming to Jeroboam while Solomon was still alive. The LORD promises to bless Jeroboam if he will be faithful to Him.
- iii. While Jeroboam was blessed at first and protected by God, in his worldly thinking, he feared what would happen if Israel still went to Jerusalem to worship. So he devised a false system of worship centered around 2 golden calves in Dan and Bethel (1 Kings 12:28-30). This became a curse and sin as the people of Israel worshipped these idols. The ENTIRE history of northern Israel was evil because of this false worship until they were carried away into Assyrian captivity after some 200 years (and 19 kings).
- iv. Another blessing that becomes a curse.

II. **Can our blessings become a curse today? Yes!**

- a. Godly families can be a great blessing – when the family is what God wants it to be, it is a great blessing.
 - i. Proverbs 18:22, *He who finds a wife finds a good thing, And obtains favor from the Lord.* Psalm 127:3, *Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward.*
 - ii. God designed the family to work – it is the IDEAL foundational unit of society.
 - iii. Much of our grief and misery as a society is the product of broken families that have abandoned God. Furthermore, abuse and neglect within a family can become a curse.
 - iv. Ungodly and spiritually neglectful families often lose their children when they leave home, because God was NOT at the center of their lives.
 - v. It is up to us, as God's people, to ensure that our homes ARE a blessing – by following His will.
- b. Wisdom and education –

- i. What a blessing it is to be able to learn and to have wisdom. God wants us to be as wise we can. BUT, how are we using such blessings?
 - ii. We noted above the example of Solomon. His wisdom in time turned him away from God. How many today are CURSED because of their wisdom and learning? Man, in his wisdom, explains God away or makes him into his own image. Man becomes too wise to accept the simplicity of the gospel.
 - iii. We must remember that the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God – 1 Corinthians 1:18-20, 3:18-20 – the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.
- c. Wealth and prosperity –
 - i. Recall again the example of Solomon. God blessed him with great wealth and power. In time, even with these resources, he turned against God. Considering how blessed he was, He should have ALWAYS remembered God. But he failed.
 - ii. Similarly, many today put their trust in wealth and prosperity. They live comfortable and luxurious lives. They have everything they need – or so they think. We must AGAIN remind ourselves of how prosperous we are. Even our middle class, and some below that level, are abundantly blessed.
 - iii. But how many turn their wealth into a curse? 1 Timothy 6:9-10 speaks clearly of this. Vs. 17 notes that the wealthy are NOT to trust in uncertain riches.
 - iv. Proverbs 30:8-9 describes the life of contentment - Give me neither poverty...lest I forget you.
 - v. Wealth, properly managed can be a great blessing, but it can also be a curse. Just remember the warning of Jesus in Matthew 19:23-24 – how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven.
- d. Time is a blessing –
 - i. When we speak of time, we realize that we all receive the same amount of time each day, week, year, etc.
 - ii. But we need to understand that time is a precious commodity that once wasted cannot be recovered. That is why Ephesians 5:16 calls for us to redeem our time (make wise use of it). The CSB translates this, “Making the most of your time”.
 - iii. So how is time a blessing? Time gives us opportunity to let our lights shine, to strengthen and influence others, to repent, opportunity to reach someone else, opportunity to raise your family, develop character, draw closer to God, etc. Time, well spent, is certainly a blessing from God.
 - iv. Consider 2 Peter 3:9 – God is longsuffering. He gives us time.
 - v. BUT, when we squander our time and opportunities it can be a curse.
 - vi. Psalm 90:12, Moses said, “So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”
- e. The prosperity of a congregation –
 - i. We know how blessed we are to be here. Consider those who have a comfortable building, adequate or abundant resources, faithful Christians. We know that we often ought to give thanks because of these blessings.
 - ii. But can we become complacent like Laodicea, or even dead like Sardis? (Revelation 3:15-16, 3:1) Often, after struggling to grow and establish themselves, churches become self-satisfied. They become indifferent and sluggish and begin to drift farther from God.
 - iii. Brethren in congregations like this may “let up” on their support of the work, whether attending, financial support, worshipping God (is it from the heart?), or dedicating your resources to the work.
 - iv. We must continually strive to remain faithful, pure and united. This means we cannot let down our guard or let up on our work.

f. Technology –

- i. Technology is another example of a blessing that can become a curse. Technology, properly used enables us to do more – more things, more efficiently. But how many misuse technology – for evil purposes. They go to the wrong places on the internet, watch the wrong things on television, associate with the wrong people online, etc. The list of cursed uses of the latest technologies is never ending.
- ii. But I want us to consider things spiritually.
 1. As we have dealt with this virus we are blessed in many ways. Consider how, even when we are apart, we are still able to study together online. We are now sharing our gospel message on YouTube and Facebook, as well as through our website.
 2. BUT, this technology can be a curse – when with it we decide we don't need to assemble with our brethren, when in our online studies we become more casual than when we are assembling together, when the resources we devote to technology come from what we ought to be dedicating to the Lord, when we allow this technology to drive a wedge between us, etc.
- iii. Let us resolve to do God's work (within his boundaries) using whatever resources we have to do as much good for His kingdom as possible.

III. We can also turn our curse into a blessing

- a. Consider Joseph – Here find an example of one who was cursed – cast into a pit by his brothers and then sold into slavery by them. BUT, Joseph ends up in Potiphar's house THEN the house of Pharaoh. When his brothers finally come, many years later, Joseph reveals himself to them. After Jacob dies they are fearful of what Joseph would do to them. But note Genesis 50:19-20. Their curse was turned into a blessing.
- b. We can turn curses into blessings.
 - i. By persevering when we face troubles.
 - ii. Also consider children of Satan who are converted to Christ – Ephesians 2:11-12, 1-3, etc. The cursed state is replaced with a blessed state.

And thus we learn how blessings can become a curse (and vice-versa). I conclude with this admonition. God has abundantly blessed us, and gives us a hope of salvation after this life. But if we reject that, or if we return to the world, we will face again His curse (Hebrews 10:26-31, 2 Peter 2:20-22, etc.). What are you doing with your blessings?