

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

When Our Blessings Become a Curse!

By Bobby Witherington

The Israelite nation was exceedingly blessed by God. God, through the appointed leadership of Moses, led the Israelite people out of Egyptian bondage, and into the promised land, Canaan (Ex. 12-Jos. 3). This land was repeatedly described as a land *“flowing with milk and honey”* (cf. Ex. 3:8; Deut. 11:9; Jer. 32:22; Ezek. 20:6; et. al.). In fact, this land was even described as *“the glory of all lands”* (Ezek. 20:6). Of even greater significance is the fact that God gave to the Jewish nation the law of Moses, a law which was intended to serve as a *“tutor”* to bring them to Christ (Gal. 3:24).

Prior to their entrance into Canaan, Moses repeatedly warned the Israelites of the dire consequences which would accrue if they allowed their blessings to blind them to their complete dependence upon God. He informed them that the time would come when they could *“eat bread without scarcity,”* when their flocks and herds would *“multiply,”* as well as their *“silver and gold,”* and urged them to *“beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes”* (Deut. 8:10-13). In another address to the Israelites Moses enlarged upon the *“curses”* which would come upon that nation if they were to exchange the worship of God for idols and disregarded *“the words”* of the Law (of Moses) which had been given to them at Mt. Sinai, and he detailed many of the blessings they would enjoy if they would *“observe carefully all the commandments”* which had been given them (Deut. 27-28).

Sadly, however, they disregarded the countless warnings they had received. They began to worship and serve idols; they disobeyed the covenant God had given them; this led eventually to the kingdom being divided (1 Kgs. 12), and later the northern kingdom (Israel) being taken into Assyrian Captivity (2 Kgs. 17), and ultimately the Southern Kingdom (Judah) being taken into Babylonian Captivity (2 Kgs. 25; 2 Chron. 36; Jer. 52). As a nation, they had been highly blessed, but they allowed their blessings to become a curse! At still a later date God, through the prophet Malachi, addressed the corrupt priests, saying, *“And now, O priests, this commandment is for you, If you will not hear, And if you will not take it to heart, To give glory to My name, Says the Lord of hosts, I will send a curse upon you, And I will curse your blessings, Yes, I have cursed them already, Because you do not take it to heart”* (Mal. 2:1-2). For them, their *“blessings”* became a *“curse!”*

Yes, the Israelite nation had been exceedingly blessed, but they forgot God, ignored His Law, worshiped and served idols, etc., and their blessings became a curse! What happened to them as a nation, in principle, happened to others as **individuals**. We shall now consider:

Two Israelites Whose Blessings Became a Curse:

1. Solomon, the tenth son of David, the second by Bathsheba, and the third king of Israel. He was the beneficiary of immense sums of wealth laid up by his father, and he became king following the death of David (1 Kgs. 2). Early in his reign *“the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, Ask! What shall I give you”* (1 Kgs. 3:5). Solomon very humbly asked for wisdom, for *“an understanding heart”* that he *could “discern between good and evil,”* and be able to *“Judge”* that nation, (1 Kgs. 3:9). And God honored that request, giving him *“a wise and understanding heart,”* as well as *“riches and honor”* beyond that of any of the kings in his days, (1 Kgs. 3:12-13). God also promised to abundantly bless Solomon if he would keep His *“statutes”* and His *“commandments,”* (1 Kgs. 3:14). And, initially, Solomon was greatly blessed. The kingdom greatly prospered during his days. *“And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore”* (1 Kgs. 4:29). His *“wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt”* and *“He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five”* (1 Kgs. 4:30, 32).

However, Solomon allowed his blessings to become a curse! Sensuality, pride, and ambition got the best of him. He eventually had *“seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart”* (1 Kgs. 11:3). *“His wives turned his heart after other gods,”* he *“burned incense and sacrificed to,”* the *“gods”* of his pagan wives, and God said, *“I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant”* (1 Kgs.

11:8, 11). The wisest man who ever lived, the man who *“spoke three thousand proverbs”* (1 Kgs. 4:35), including many of the *“proverbs”* contained in the Old Testament book of Proverbs, failed to practice the wisdom he taught. He allowed his blessings to become a curse!

2. Absalom, a son of David, who was born of a polygamous marriage (2 Sam. 3:2, 3). He was of royal descent on both sides, for his mother was *“the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur”* (2 Sam. 3:3). He was remarkably handsome. In fact, *“in all Israel there was no one who was praised as much as Absalom for his good looks. From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him”* (2 Sam. 14:25). He was sufficiently conniving and had such charm that he *“stole the hearts of the men of Israel”* (2 Sam. 15:6). However, though he was the recipient of so many blessings, and was heir apparent to the throne, Absalom was not a good man. He murdered his brother, (2 Sam. 13:29); he conspired against his own father, (2 Sam. 15:13-14), resulting in a battle which resulted in the *“slaughter of twenty thousand”* people, as well as Absalom himself, who was riding on a mule, having his head caught in a terebinth tree, with him left *“hanging between heaven and earth,”* after which Joab *“took three spears,”* and *“thrust them through Absalom’s heart,”* and *“the people...cast him in a large pit in the woods”* (2 Sam. 15:7, 9, 14, 16, 17). Few people in history had so much potential. He was highly blessed, but because of his self-absorbing ego, his disregard for others, and absence of character, he allowed his blessings to become a **curse!**

Other Bible examples could be cited of those who began with such great promise, who were highly blessed, but who allowed their blessings to become a curse. However, by way of application, let us now cite two modern situations in which highly blessed people often allow:

Their Blessings To Become A Curse

1. Those possessed with worldly wisdom and a superior education. There is nothing wrong with wisdom itself. In fact, Solomon said this: *“Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding”* (Prov. 4:7). However, there are many who are wise in their *“own eyes”* (Prov. 3:7), who have sat at the feet of infidels and have learned many things that are not so, and are like the philosophers at Athens who *“spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing”* (Acts 17:21), and are ready to listen to anything except the word of God. Multitudes are like those described in Romans 1:22, people *“professing to be wise,”* but who *“became fools,”* and plunged themselves into the kind of moral degeneracy so clearly outlined in Romans 1:23-32! Note Proverbs 26:12: *“Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”*

2. Those Possessing Great Wealth. Money per se’ is not wrong. Properly used, it can be a tool for providing for one’s own family, for supporting evangelism, helping those in need, etc. (cf. 1 Tim. 6:17-19; Prov. 3:9-10). When the Israelites finally inhabited the land of Canaan, they *“possessed houses full of goods, Cisterns already dug, vineyards, olive groves, and fruit trees in abundance;”* they *“ate and were filled and grew fat, and delighted themselves”* with God’s *“great goodness,”* but they later *“were disobedient, and rebelled against”* God, and cast His law *“behind their backs”* (Neh. 9:15-26), thereby allowing their blessings to become a **curse.**

Though I can think of numerous wonderful exceptions to such, it is a fact that those who become wealthy often attribute their success to their own wisdom, and fail to give God the glory, and sometimes even look down upon those who are much less successful in material goods. Solomon said that *“Wealth makes many friends, but the poor is separated from his friend,”* and that *“every man is a friend to one who gives gifts”* (Prov. 19:4, 6). This puts the wealthy at a disadvantage, for they may wonder if their *“friends”* are *“friends”* because of genuine feelings and appreciation, or are they *“friends”* because they believe it is to their personal advantage. But perhaps the major danger for one of great wealth is that of allowing one’s self to develop the self-sufficient attitude of the rich *“fool”* who bragged to himself, saying, *“I have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat drink and be merry”* (Lk. 12:19), while failing to realize that death could come at any moment, and neglecting to glorify God Who made it all possible.

Conclusion: If space provided, many more examples could be cited of those who allow their blessings to become a curse. But the *“bottom line”* is this: in America **we are all blessed**; even the poorest have access to advantages not available to the most affluent in previous generations. We also have the blessing of political freedom — freedom to go and come as we please, freedom to choose our vocations, freedom to worship, freedom to choose our mates, our forms of recreation, etc., etc. But think of the countless people who use these freedoms to engage in every form of activity which is anathema to God! And even to become enslaved to dope, drugs, sex, and Satan! In such instances, their blessings become a curse. Friend, what about you; have you allowed your blessings to become a curse. — *Rise Up and Build*, June 10, 2018. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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