

Christians and Curses

An Examination of a Popular Heresy in the Church
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Biblical facts concerning curses:

1. There is not a single example anywhere in the Bible of someone breaking a curse in any way. There are no examples of someone attempting to break a curse either.

2. The Bible does not contain the phrase *breaking a curse* or any similar phrase either that would indicate that curses can be broken .

3. Christ does not teach or demonstrate the need of breaking curses anywhere in the Gospels. Christ simply ministers healing and cast out demons without this kind of preparation. This is what the disciples knew that perhaps we don't know.

4. The 12 apostles , the apostle Paul or any other writer of the New Testament does not teach or demonstrate the need to break curses. They simply minister healing and deliverance to people without this kind of preparation.

5. The New Testament consistently teaches that believers are *blessed* and does not even hint that they are cursed in any way.

6. When we survey every verse in the New Testament that uses a form of the word *curse* not a single one even hints that Christians might have a problem with curses .

7. Galatians 3:13-14 is the one passage that connects Christ's sacrifice with curses. It says nothing about *breaking curses* and is speaking specifically about *the curse of the Law of Moses* that was spoken by God. There is nothing in this passage or any other about breaking the so-called curses that people might speak.

A Short History of the Curses Teaching

How did we get to teaching *breaking curses*? British teacher, the late Derek Prince revived a Dark Ages superstition in the mid-80's and spread it through widespread public teaching and media. Many others were influenced and began teaching it as well.

Prince was also involved with the 1970's authoritarian *Shepherding Movement*. Thousands were harmed by this movement . The influence of this movement still remains throughout the Church and tens of thousands of today's American Christians have embraced the authoritarian ideas that Prince and the *Fort Lauderdale Five* taught .

Derek Prince's teaching on curses is now supported by isolated verses mainly from the Law of Moses and by relating positive experiences of breaking curses. The Law of Moses does not apply to Christians in any way and spiritual experiences can be misinterpreted easily. Breaking curses cannot be taught in a direct way from the New Testament. The ideas behind this teaching are simply not present in the New Testament.

What about positive experiences of breaking curses? Unfortunately, it has been proven that most people are highly suggestible. Most people will have positive experiences doing things that have no real value and then will assume that what they did made the difference. This has been called the *placebo effect*. Recent research has shown remarkable and measurable health improvement in 30-40% of patients when they were deceived into thinking that they were taking acupuncture or a new miracle drug when they were getting no treatment at all. Therefore, we must evaluate teaching and practice from the New Testament scriptures not through experience.

Generational Curses Idea from Phrase in the Law of Moses

The primary idea supporting *generational curses* is often taken from the Law of Moses without sharing what the passage actually says. Often people will quote:

...visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations...

When these same people are queried about where this phrase is from, they will often fail to identify it as being from the passage often called *the Ten Commandments* in the Law of Moses. This is the first and second commandments in that passage:

Exodus 20:1-6 Then God spoke all these words, saying, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. "You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments .

What specific iniquity is God speaking about? *Idolatry*. This so-called curse is not attached to any other kinds of sin.

Who is God going to visit iniquity upon their descendents? God is going to punish those Jews living under the Law of Moses who practice idolatry and who hate God. No one else.

How will this so-called curse work out? Those Jewish idolaters who hate God will have children who practice idolatry and will hate God. This so-called curse does not affect anyone else.

5 Important Points to Consider about this passage :

1. No sincere Christian today should be living under the law of Moses. They should be living by grace in Jesus Christ in the New Covenant not the Law of Moses.

2. No sincere Christian is making idols and practicing idolatry. The passage does not allow Christian spiritualization of the sin of idolatry. It is speaking literally about making and worshipping physical idols.

3. No real Christian hates God. These ideas are mutually exclusive. You can't be a follower of Christ and hate God at the same time. This passage does not apply to practicing Christians in any way.

4. This passage says that God is showing lovingkindness to thousands who serve and love Him in the Law of Moses. How much more is this true in the New Covenant.

5. This passage does not say that this so-called generational curse can be broken. This passage does not use the word curse either. Only repentance from idolatry would change God's mind. Breaking this curse is certainly not a solution that this passage offers.

Two Prophets Correct this Misunderstanding

Even the people living under the Law misunderstood this idea of God cursing, punishing, or judging the next generation for the sins of the previous generation. Apparently, the erroneous idea of a *generational curse* was even being taught to Jews under the Law. God corrects that idea through the prophet Ezekiel. There are three generations spoken of in this passage.

Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, "What do you mean by using this proverb concerning the land of Israel saying, "The fathers eat the sour grapes, But the children's teeth are set on edge?" As I live, declares the Lord GOD, you are surely not going to use this proverb in Israel anymore. Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die. Ezekiel 18:1-4

It is pretty clear that people in that day were also teaching the idea of God punishing succeeding generations for the sins of the their fathers. God says clearly here that God will judge each soul for its own sins. We remind the reader that the New Testament reveals something better than this. We are forgiven

completely because of Christ's sacrifice for us. The passage continues with God's illustration of individual responsibility by describing the first generation in three generations. The Lord God says:

But if a man is righteous , and practices justice and righteousness ... if he walks in My statutes and My ordinances so as to deal faithfully-- he is righteous and will surely live, declares the Lord GOD. Ezekiel 18:5-9 (long list of righteous acts edited for brevity)

The first generation is a righteous man. He is declared righteous under the Law of Moses by what he does and does not do according to the statutes and ordinances in the Law of Moses. He is not judged by God because of what his parents have done. (Of course, Christians are declared righteous on the basis of faith in Christ.) Then God describes the second generation by saying:

Then he may have a violent son who sheds blood, and who does any of these things to a brother (though he himself did not do any of these things), ... will he live? He will not live! He has committed all these abominations, he will surely be put to death; his blood will be on his own head. Ezekiel 18:10-13 (long list of unrighteous acts edited for brevity)

God makes the same point. The righteous father does not convey righteousness to his son. The wicked son will be judged on his own merit as the father was judged on his own merit. God does not hold anyone else responsible nor does He punish succeeding generations for the sins of parents. The passage now speaks to the third generation.

Now behold, he has a son who has observed all his father's sins which he committed, and observing does not do likewise ... but executes My ordinances, and walks in My statutes; he will not die for his father's iniquity, he will surely live. Ezekiel 18:14-17 (long list of righteous acts edited for brevity)

Once again God makes the same point. God will not punish the righteous son for the sins of the wicked father. God is not holding a righteous son responsible for the sins of his father. The next verse reemphasizes that God will hold each individual responsible under the Law for their own sins be speaking about the wicked father again.

As for his father, because he practiced extortion, robbed his brother, and did what was not good among his people, behold, he will die for his iniquity. Ezekiel 18:18

What the passage above is refuting is the idea that God would in any way hold righteous children responsible for the sins of their unrighteous fathers. This was true even under the Law of Moses. This is much more true today in the New

Covenant. God is only holding them accountable/responsible for their own sins. The idea that a generational punishment in the form of a curse or anything else being passed down to those who are righteous is refuted by the above passage.

There is a second witness in the prophets that God is not cursing, judging or punishing succeeding generations for the sins of fathers. Jeremiah the prophet speaks for the LORD about this matter as well. This passage also tells us about the New Covenant. God says:

In those days they will not say again, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children's teeth are set on edge". But everyone will die for his own iniquity; each man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth will be set on edge. Jeremiah 31:29-30

God corrects the same idea. He is not cursing, judging or punishing anyone for the sins of their parents. Everyone is responsible for their own behavior. This was true in the Old Covenant, the Law of Moses, but is also true in the New Covenant. The LORD continues to speak through the prophet by predicting the New Covenant:

Behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them, declares the LORD. Jeremiah 31:31-32

The LORD says that the New Covenant will not be like the Old Covenant. The LORD also tells us the children of Israel broke that covenant. God describes Himself as a husband to those in this covenant clearly implying that Israel was like an unfaithful wife. The LORD then describes how the New Covenant will be different than the Old Covenant.

But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD, I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Jeremiah 31:33

The Old Covenant had laws written on stone tablets. In the New Covenant, the law will be written on the hearts of people. The Old Covenant had external law imposed upon people. Those who partake of the New Covenant will have a new internal nature. God also states that He will be their God and they will be His people. Since the same thing could be said of the children of Israel, we must say that this implies a new and more intimate relationship with God than those who experienced the Old Covenant. The next part of the prediction of the New Covenant seems to validate that idea. God says:

And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, "Know the LORD", for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, declares the LORD, for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." Jeremiah 31:34

Those living in the Old Covenant knew God only through leaders such as righteous kings, prophets and the priests. They needed to be taught by these leaders about God. Generally speaking, most of the children of Israel did not know God personally. In contrast, the youngest, poorest, most sinful, participant in the New Covenant will have a personal relationship with God Himself because of what Christ has done.

This passage also says that God will forgive iniquity and remember sins no more. This is important for our discussion about generation curses. Those in the New Covenant have had their sins *forgiven and forgotten* by God. *How can there be a generational curse affecting those whose sins are forgiven and forgotten?* The idea of a generational curse would require God remembering the sins of a parent when he has forgotten the sins of the person themselves. This is really inconsistent. God would forgive and forget our sins but would remember and curse us with the sins of our fathers. This cannot be true. This is a heresy that undermines our faith in Christ's work for us at the cross.

Confusion Because of the Generational Repetition of Sins

Some have noted that certain families experience repetition of certain obvious sins and obvious problems. This is not obvious in every family but nevertheless is true of all families. Why is there a repetition of sins generation after generation? Original sin is the answer. *There is a widespread failure to teach Christians about Original sin.* Original sin is the sin of Adam and Eve in the garden being passed down to all humanity from generation to generation. *It is not a curse but a fallen nature that is being passed down.*

God did not curse Adam and Eve or their descendants. He specifically cursed only the ground and the serpent. (Genesis 3:14, 17). God told Eve that He would multiply her pain in childbirth but the word *curse* is not used. God told Adam that the ground would be cursed because of his actions and that it would require toil to produce food. The capacity to reproduce the sins of our parents is found in the fallen nature of all humanity. We all inherit a sinful nature from our parents who inherited from their parents. This sinful nature, the adamic nature, is not a curse that can be broken by prayer and every individual and every family experiences it.

The answer for original sin, the adamic nature, is found in Romans Chapter 6. We are to *reckon ourselves dead to sin* by identification with the cross. The New Covenant gives us a gift of a new nature. We are not to try to fix the old fallen adamic nature but to live in an entirely new nature made in the image of Christ by

the power of the Holy Spirit. We observe *original sin* in people as they reproduce the sins and other characteristics of their parents. Original sin, the adamic nature, is often enflamed by demonic activity occurring in families generation after generation as well. Everyone does this and not just a few that have very visible and obvious problems reoccurring. Reoccurring problems and sins are not evidences of a curse but evidence of original sin and the work of familiar spirits.

Defining a Curse

The definition of curse has become hugely loose and broad in American Christian culture. Most things being called *curse*s today do not match the actual biblical meaning of the word *curse*. There seems to be two basic kinds of curses; Divine and human. Here is the definition of *divine curses* that seems more in line with Scripture.

A divine curse is the intentional verbal invocation by God with supernatural power and potential to cause harm.

All of these curses are found in Old Testament. Most are found in the Law of Moses and only apply to those Jews living under the Law of Moses. There is no biblical evidence that any of these curses can be broken for those living under the Law. They simply must repent and become obedient to the Law of Moses. However, none of these curses apply to Christians living under grace. None of them are found in the New Testament that only speaks of God's children being blessed. God is not schizophrenic. He is not cursing His forgiven children. So then, what about *human curses*? Here is a definition of a human curses that seems more in line with Scripture.

A human curse is the intentional verbal invocation of God or a false deity to cause harm.

A curse in the Bible is *always intentional*. It is clear that if God speaks a curse, it is never accidental or without forethought. This is true of human beings as well. If a human person speaks a curse, it is the purposeful invocation of a spiritual power, a deity, to cause harm to an individual, organization or object. It can never be accidental or unintentional and still be a curse. Therefore, a number of things that are often called curses today are not really curses because they are not intentional or they don't call upon a deity to cause harm. Here are some things are often called curses today that are not curses:

Bad confessions. Saying something negative about yourself or someone else is not a curse unless you are asking God to harm you or another person intentionally. This may be a reflection of a bad self image that needs to be changed but does not supernaturally empower a deity to harm you.

Negative words over a child or a subordinate. A parent or authority figure speaking bad words over a child or an adult is not a curse in a biblical sense. This kind of speaking may cause psychological harm to a child but does not contain the invocation of a spiritual power. Hurtful words spoken without premeditation in frustration or anger are not generally intended to harm either. There is no doubt that these things are harmful psychologically but do not empower a deity to bring supernatural harm.

What about things that are curses in a biblical sense? What if someone intentionally calls on a deity to harm us? God is not going to empower a curse against those whom He has blessed. Some are teaching that the devil empowers the curses of people. Nowhere does Scripture teach this idea. God is the power behind every curse in the Old Testament.

The curse of any being, human or angelic, cannot undo the Father's blessing on believers because of what Christ has done. However, if the person believes in curses, then fear and unbelief can affect their appropriation of blessing from God. If the Christian believes in the curse more than God's grace in Christ, then he or she departs from faith in Christ. It is not the curse that impacts the person but the fear and unbelief that impacts the believer as he ceases to believe in Christ's protective power.

God's blessing is not fragile. It has powerful substance. However, blessing is received and maintained by faith in Christ. The one who maintains their faith in Christ's total and absolute victory is completely unaffected by the curses of other human beings. However, the curses teaching creates fear of things that should not be feared and undermines faith in the victory of the cross of Jesus Christ.

Be strong in the Lord and the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

The curses teaching is the devil's scheme to undermine your faith in Christ and His New Covenant blessings and to get you to embrace the Old Covenant Law of Moses and its curses.

For those who need to study this more thoroughly, Dr. Sapp's book "*What About Curses?*" reviews every passage in the New Testament that mentions curses and discusses the problem of applying the curses in the Law of Moses to believers. Available in printed or PDF download on www.allnationsmin.org, 1-817-514-0653