

Benefits of Redemption



Teaching Letter
By Derek Prince

Has God made a way for us to be delivered from the slavery of the kingdom of darkness to become heirs of the kingdom of light? Yes, He has. The way that God has made for us is through the death of Jesus Christ on our behalf. On the Cross, Jesus took upon Himself the curses due to us by our disobedience so that, in turn, we might enter into the blessings Jesus earned by His obedience. These blessings cover the whole area of the kingdom of light. Both the curses and the blessings are worked out in three main areas of our lives: spiritual, physical and material.

Spiritual Benefits

What are the spiritual curses from which Christ has delivered us? Likewise, what are the spiritual blessings which Christ has made available to us?

First of all, let's look at the basic causes that bring blessings as well as the causes that bring curses.

> Now it shall be, if you diligently obey [listen to the voice of] the Lord your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I am commanding you today, that the Lord your God will put you high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings will come to you and reach you, if you obey the Lord your God. (Deuteronomy 28:1–2, nasb)

Next, Moses turns to the reason why the curses come.

> But it shall come about, if you will not obey [listen to the voice of] the Lord your God, to be careful to follow all His commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today, that all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. (v. 15, nasb)

It is vitally important for us to understand the decisive difference between receiving the blessings and receiving the curses. That distinction is summed up in one short, but very important phrase: "Listen to the voice of the Lord your God."

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Our whole destiny for well-being or for disaster is settled by the voice we listen to. Listening to the voice of the Lord and obeying what He says will bring blessing. But not listening to the voice of the Lord will bring many curses. Of course, it is not sufficient to listen to the voice of the Lord unless we also obey what He says. Conversely, it is impossible to obey what God says unless we first hear His voice, because His voice tells us what He requires us to do.

The great spiritual danger that confronts professing Christians is to become insensitive to the voice of God. Many may continue in their religious activities and duties, which are habitual and formal (a lifestyle they have cultivated) yet without any ongoing, continuous awareness of God's voice. Through all dispensations, the one requirement God asks of His people is that we listen to His voice.

The Bible Speaks

This requirement is stated clearly by the Lord Himself in Jeremiah 7:22–23. In these verses, God explains what He really required of Israel.

> For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this is what I commanded them saying, "Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you will be My people ..." (nasb)

Notice the simple requirement for the Lord to be our God and we His people: "Obey My voice and I will be your God."

You may think that the New Testament is different, but that would not be true. The principle is exactly the same. Jesus sums it up in one single verse: "My sheep listen to My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27, nasb).

The mark that we really belong to Jesus is not that we practice certain denominational patterns of life or worship, but that we hear His voice—and, hearing His voice, that we follow Him. The simple pathway to God's blessings is to hear and obey His voice. The inevitable end of not hearing and obeying God's voice is to receive the curses.

I will now briefly list for you the curses in the spiritual (inner) realm of our personality that result from disobedience to God. These are listed by Moses in Deuteronomy 28.

- In verse 20, Moses says we will experience confusion in all we undertake.
- In verse 28, smitten with madness and bewilderment of heart.
- In verse 34, we shall be driven mad by what we see.
- In verse 65, a trembling heart and despair of soul.

These are some of the spiritual consequences we encounter in the lives of people in today's world: confusion, frustration, inner agony and torment.

What are the blessings in the spiritual realm that result from obedience? Of course, there are countless blessings. But I believe they can be summed up in one short and beautiful word: *peace*.

When Isaiah wrote about the exchange that took place when Jesus died on the Cross, he said this: "The punishment that brought us peace was upon him" (Isaiah 53:5, niv). Jesus endured the judgment and the punishment due to our sin and disobedience that we might be reconciled with God. As a result of being reconciled with God, we can be delivered from inner agony, torment, confusion and frustration. We can know the reality of a deep, settled, inward peace.

Let's look at two other Scriptures in the New Testament that speak of this peace.

> Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:1, nasb)

> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7, niv)

What beautiful words! No longer are we guilty. No longer do we fear that somehow we are not pleasing God. We have peace with God. This beautiful verse in Philippians 4 describes the experiential results within us. The peace of God will guard our hearts and minds in our contemporary civilization.

Actually, in its Hebrew form, the word *peace* means more than just the absence of conflict. It means wholeness or well-being. This type of peace begins in the inner man, but it leads to total well-being. It affects every area of our lives.

Physical Benefits

Let's now go back to Deuteronomy 28 (nasb1995) to look at all the physical curses that result from not hearing and not obeying the voice of the Lord. They are indeed many. As you read this, bear in mind that all these maladies are stated as curses that do not belong to the redeemed people of God.

The pestilence clings to you (v. 21); consumption, fever and inflammation (v. 22); boils, hemorrhoids, scab, and itch (v. 27); blindness (v. 28); boils from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head (v. 35).

Many of us as Christians are enduring curses when we should be enjoying blessings. Why? Probably for two main reasons: either because we don't know that they are curses or because we don't realize that Jesus delivered us from the curses that we might inherit the blessings. Please read verse 59 of Deuteronomy 28 and check to see whether you are living in the curses or the blessings.

> The Lord will bring extraordinary plagues on you and your descendants [notice that they go from generation to generation], even severe and lasting plagues, and miserable and chronic sicknesses. (nasb1995)

A Vivid Image

The prophet Isaiah gives us a very vivid picture of the results of disobedience and rebellion. Speaking to the nation of Israel, he compares their condition resulting from disobedience to that of a completely sick body:

> Why should you be beaten anymore? Why do you persist in rebellion? Your whole head is injured, your whole heart afflicted. From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness—only wounds and welts and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil. (Isaiah 1:5–6, niv)

This passage is a metaphorical picture of the results of disobedience. However, one day as I was reading it, the Holy Spirit showed me something wonderful and beautiful. I realized that Jesus had already taken all the curses upon Himself because He became our substitute. Those verses were not just a metaphorical picture of the condition of Israel as a result of their disobedience. They were also a literal picture of Jesus as He hung on the Cross.

Jesus was beaten with a Roman scourge, with its fearful nine thongs. His head was injured: the thorns had been pressed down upon His head. His whole heart was afflicted. I believe Jesus died of a broken heart. This passage is an exact description of Jesus as He hung upon the Cross. Why did He do it? To redeem us from the curse by being made a curse for us. All those physical curses resulting from our disobedience against God came upon Jesus as He hung there on the Cross.

Let's look now at the physical blessings that were purchased for us by Jesus. We will turn again, first of all, to Isaiah 53:4–5:

> Surely He [Jesus] took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered Him punished by God, stricken by Him, and afflicted. But He [Jesus] was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. (niv)

Jesus took the physical consequences of disobedience that we might in turn have healing. We see this in that phrase at the end of verse 5, "By his wounds we are healed." More literally in Hebrew it says, "By his wounds it was healed for us." Or we could perhaps say, "by his wounds healing was obtained for us." Healing was made our inheritance through the wounds that Jesus bore on His body.

The next part of this passage is quoted in the New Testament in Matthew's gospel, describing the ministry of Jesus in healing the sick and casting out evil spirits. This is what it says:

> When evening came, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill. This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: "He Himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases." (Matthew 8:16–17, nasb1995)

Matthew had no doubt who was referred to in Isaiah 53. He applied it to Jesus. Notice also that Matthew (who was a

Jew and understood Hebrew), had no doubt that the application of those verses in Isaiah 53 was physical. It was the physical healing of the sick that was the fulfillment of the prophecy given in Isaiah.

Notice what Jesus says in answering His critics for healing a man on the Sabbath:

> If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath?" (John 7:23, nasb1995)

Jesus makes the entire man well. Every area of human being and human personality can be healed through Jesus.

Notice too what Peter said after the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate in Acts 3:16. This is how he explained the healing:

> By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through Him that has completely healed him, as you all can see." (niv)

What is the result? "Complete healing." Jesus said, "I've made an entire man well." That is the physical outworking of the redemption provided for us by Jesus. We are grateful for the work of physicians, psychiatrists and others. But there is only one person in the universe who can say, "I make an entire man well! I can deal with all his problems: spiritual, mental, emotional, physical." Who is that Person? The Lord Jesus Christ.

As we contact Jesus by faith on the basis of His redemption, the same results that took place and are recorded in the New Testament are available to you and me today through faith in Jesus.

Material Benefits

Now we will look at the blessings and the curses specifically in the material realm. First of all, we look at the material blessings promised to obedience—and there are many indeed. (It is not possible for me in this brief letter to list them all.) Here is what Moses says in Deuteronomy 28:

- Blessed in the city and in the country (v. 3)
- Blessed shall be the offspring of your body, the produce of your ground, the offspring of your beasts, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock (v. 4)
- Your basket and your kneading bowl will be blessed (v. 5)
- The Lord will command the blessing in your barns and all that you put your hand to (v. 8)
- You will abound in prosperity, in the offspring of your body, your beast and the produce of your ground in the land the Lord gives you (v. 11).

The phrase, "The Lord will make you abound in prosperity" describes a blessing that results from hearing and obeying the voice of the Lord. Moses returns briefly to the same theme in Deuteronomy 29:9:

> So keep the words of this covenant to do them, that you may prosper in all that you do. (nasb1995)

Keeping the words of God's covenant causes us to prosper in all we do. That leaves no room for failure or frustration in any area of our lives. These are the blessings promised to obedience.

Now let's look at the material curses for disobedience. Going back to Deuteronomy 28:29, we read:

> You will grope at noon, as the blind man gropes in darkness, and you will not prosper in your ways. (nasb1995)

Just as abounding in prosperity is a blessing, so not prospering in our ways is a curse. More completely and vividly, Moses states this again in Deuteronomy 28:47–48. Here the blessing and the curse are set directly side by side.

> Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in the lack of all things; and He will put an iron yoke on your neck until He has destroyed you. (nasb1995)

You could not have the two alternatives more clearly pictured than in those two verses. The results of obedience: the abundance of all things, serving God with joy and a glad heart. The results of disobedience: serving enemies in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in the lack of all things.

As I was meditating on those words one day, I saw that this is a description of absolute poverty. A person who is hungry, has nothing to eat; thirsty, has nothing to drink; naked, no clothes to wear; and in lack of all things. That person is in a condition of absolute poverty. It is impossible to picture greater poverty than that: hunger, thirst, nakedness, and lack of all things. The important truth we need to see is that poverty is a curse. It does not belong to the people of God. What joy and release came into my own soul when I saw this so clearly one day: poverty is not for the children of God. It is not for God's redeemed people. Instead, the will of God is abundance that we may serve Him with joy and with gladness of heart.

Once, when I was preaching to a congregation in New Zealand, the Holy Spirit was simultaneously showing me something in my own spirit and mind that has remained with me ever since. The Holy Spirit showed me Jesus on the Cross. He was hungry, He was thirsty, He was naked, and He was in want of all things. Why? It had to be this way because He exhausted the poverty curse on our behalf. He completely took the curse away once and for all. Why? So that you and I, redeemed believers through the blood of Jesus, might not have to endure that yoke of iron—that poverty curse.

The Divine Exchange

Poverty is not a blessing resulting from obedience, but it is the result of disobedience. Thank God, though all of us have been disobedient, Jesus took upon Himself the iniquity of us all. Our rebellion and all its evil consequences, including poverty, were visited upon Jesus as He hung there on the Cross.

This exchange is clearly summed up in the New Testament. In 2 Corinthians we get the two aspects of the exchange in the material realm. Paul says:

> For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich. (2 Corinthians 8:9, nasb1995)

> And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have abundance for every good deed. (2 Corinthians 9:8, nasb1995)

What's the exchange there? Jesus took our poverty on the Cross that we in turn might have access to His wealth and to His abundance. It is through grace. Grace comes only through Jesus Christ. Grace cannot be earned. Grace is appropriated only by faith.

In the original Greek, that statement in 2 Corinthians 9:8 is amazing. The word *abound* occurs twice, and the word *all* occurs five times! This is what Jesus has obtained for us. He exhausted the poverty curse that we might inherit the blessings.

The blessings in all three areas obtained for us by Jesus—the spiritual, the physical and the material—are summed up in that beautiful verse of the third epistle of John, verse 2, where John says:

> Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper [this is the material] and be in good health [this is the physical], just as your soul prospers [this is the spiritual]. (nasb1995)

That is the will of God. That is your inheritance as a believer in Jesus Christ.

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