

Blessings and curses: Chapter 7 "Curses"

Today I paid a visit to the tax lady. I had big plans because this was becoming an annual event just like Christmas. We had laid out plans all year based on how it was supposed to go down. I improved the house with new blinds. All along I thought about taxes. It's how I've played the game for several years now. I know what I pay the government and what I get back. I actually look forward to tax time. This year was a little different because I created bills that the tax lady would crush with one swish of her mouse.

I have been blessed by the tax lady. She found ways to pay off my education. She found ways to help our daughter gain incentives because she is autistic. The government loves me. The tax lady loves me, and obviously God loves me. I used to hate tax time, but it's become the best thing since sliced bread after I met my tax lady. I have been so blessed.

Then came my tax in 2016. The blessed me goes to see the blessed tax lady. I sleep so well the night before. For years now we get a tax break on our daughter. This year we even helped her get government assistance. God is so good helping us out. I became cocky spending extra money on a cruise I couldn't afford. What's the harm, me God, and the tax lady are best friends.

We still are best friends, but things have changed unawares to me. You see, once my daughter got her own help then the government didn't need to help me. My tax credit went poof in one fell swoop of the mouse. I could pay for the home improvements but not the trip. I sat there shot in my smugness. I put on a brave face but I assumed too much. It's like I went from blessed to cursed within an hour. Little thoughts creeped into my heart like, "Did I tick God off?" I am such a sinner. The big one is where the money flows is how God feels about you.

This of course is hog wash but I know my heart and how it thinks. My little ticker dropped 4000 feet this morning. I am not blessed anymore. This is ridiculous, but it's how most

Blessings and curses: Chapter 7 "Curses"

of us feel when things don't go our way. Yet, the news was good. I received enough money to pay off the home improvements and that is a great thing. I am a blessed man. We just bought a new car, and my health is wonderful. Sure, I had a root canal, but insurance covered it all. In the blessings world I am still a blessed man. I have a wonderful wife and a great life. Why then do I feel I got kicked because I spent too much? I will pay this trip off, but not this year. So did God cancel the blessings contract he clearly had with me and replace it with a curse for spending over my assumptions? The answer is no.

No matter how smart I get it seems I appear dumb. I know God does not bless based on the work we do. God does not shine his face upon us just because we are nice one week. On the flip side God does not curse us because we are naughty. The love or anger of God does not work that way, yet at times we feel blessed or cursed. This chapter will explore the cursed side of life. Who causes this absurd cursed feeling and why do we think that way about blessings and curses?

Did you know I purposely waited to write this chapter? I don't think it's a good thing to wait for a curse before you write. Was I wanting or expecting a curse? Well no, but I tend to write better when inspired. I needed a curse to get my creative juices flowing. Yes, sitting in the car after visiting the tax lady got my juices flowing. The best part was driving later. I passed through a speed trap in slow motion watching the cop's radar gun rise as I approached. I fully expected a ticket, not for speeding, but for a cursed day to stay cursed. Then life sped up and he put down the radar in dismay as I cruised on by. I could breathe again.

It's all about expectations. I expected to be blessed because God and the tax lady love me. I expected to be cursed in a speed trap because my day felt cursed. Did I deserve a curse? Did I do anything wrong? I know the man named Job asked those very same questions in the Bible. Read this excerpt from Job 38. It's so good. **"Who is this that darkens counsel by words without**

**knowledge? "Now gird up your loins like a man, and I will ask you, and you instruct Me! "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding, who set its measurements? Since you know."**

I love the last words, "Since you know." God is saying "Since you know who I am and what my thoughts and motives are." In reality we don't know. Job was never privy to the interaction God had with Satan in the beginning of that story. Job thought he had been a good boy. They called him a righteous man. God loves to bless righteous people. Just like Santa loves to shower gifts on good children. That whole book argued over the validity of Job's actions in relation to blessings and curses.

Again, it's about expectations. Throughout this whole book I wanted to paint a picture that we have been schooled to believe in blessings and curses. We have been taught through traditions that good people get blessed and bad people get cursed. God helps those who help themselves. Santa says be good for goodness sake. By the way, God helps those who do good work only, right? What happens to those who need to be bailed out? Does God turn a blind eye? Clearly Santa helps us every year (consistently on the same day too) no matter what we do. Is Santa better than God?

Our inner being believes in blessings and curses. The whole point is to avoid curses and blessings will come. Is that the way it works? We see a ladder and walk around it. Really who wants something dropped on us from above? Walking under a ladder is plain stupid rather than a curse. Seeing a black cat can be avoided, right? I suppose hitting a black cat in a car might be worse. How about seeing a falling star? If we do, then make a wish (to who?). However, if you tell someone then it won't come true.

Blessings and curses: Chapter 7 "Curses"

We avoid curses. When I went through a cursed period of driving what was I to do? Pray more? Sometimes we just have to go through it. Maybe a curse is really a period of time where things challenge you. Adele says in her song Someone Like You, "**Sometimes it lasts in love but sometimes it hurts instead.**" Things don't always go the way we planned (like taxes) but life is a journey. However, a curse might hurt more than a blessing.

I cherished the ability to marry my high school sweetheart yet that marriage became a curse. I prayed for help and God sent a divorce. In hindsight it was a blessing for us both. But it became a curse for my kids. I think curses come down to the way life goes. A good day could be a curse because we get cocky (extra trip). Maybe we make curses ourselves like me stubbornly marrying my high school sweetheart regardless of several warnings from friends.

Fair enough, I was warned by several people in my second marriage too. Deanna, however, has been a blessing. I think curses come from a verse in Genesis 4:6-7, which says, "**Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it."**" Maybe we cause our own trouble.

Caine wanted the blessings of God. However, deep within his heart he wanted them his way. The coach of the Calgary Flames hockey club always says, "Playing the right way." What is the right way? Isn't God saying the same thing to Caine. We read these verses and think God is asking us to be good. We read this verse and think God is looking for a reason to bless. Our nature thinks a lot of things. I think we have it all wrong.

Blessings and curses: Chapter 7 "Curses"

Since the beginning of the church people have heard that we should avoid sin. The verses above contradict this mentality. A curse is more about our attitude and actions. When I disregarded the warnings I married into a curse. One night it was snowing really bad and I took the back roads home. That was stupid. I caused my own accident. Cursed driver or cursed thinker? Didn't God warn Caine to think twice. It's not about being good but to think about why you are doing the things you do.

Most certainly black cats will at one time or another cross our path. People say things like ladders and cats cause curses. I believe a curse is forged within our anger. How often do we hear people being blinded with anger? Frustration tends to speed up the choice. God said, "Sin is crouching at your door Caine." There is no anger in choosing to marry someone? No? I will prove them all wrong. I will force a blessing because I am right. There was anger and pride in my first marriage choice.

There is a strange set of verses written by Paul the apostle in Romans. He talks about the laws of God given through Moses. For most of us this is hard reading. Much of what he writes means more to the people in those days. Still, if we slowly break it down there is amazing truth there. Paul writes *I have treated people badly. I have gambled on things like buying a trip I could not afford. I have made bad choices.* Did curses follow him or did he forge curses? Paul has a strange answer.

Romans 5:10 says, **"God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful grace became more abundant."** Paul goes on to answer this statement by saying, "No, that's not the way it is." In a nut shell Paul says we are allowed to sin because it is the way God teaches us. There is another

Blessings and curses: Chapter 7 "Curses"

side to this. It also shows us that even though we sin, screw up, and make mistakes, God does not curse us. God seems to bless us all the more. Why? It's simple." God loves more than he hates.

A curse seems to suggest that we did something wrong and we deserve punishment. Paul's statement above shows us that God loves us regardless. Maybe even in spite of ourselves God loves. Have you ever made a mess but asked, "You still like me, right?" We expect a disaster when we screw up. God seems to not play ball that way. He is not into curses. He is into encouragement and love for those he created. I have wanted to crush my car when it breaks down, but I prefer it to work well. That is exactly what God wanted for Caine: work well, Caine.

I admit that it seems like sin (evil) is waiting for us to mess up. I wonder if Satan wants to kill us or maybe he is waiting for an opportunity to invoke disappointment. It's like feeling, "God didn't bail us out" or another little voice inside is chiding me, "I knew God did not love me." Is God obligated to bail us out? Inside, surely we expect to be saved. The questions I hear about God all the time are, "Why did God kill the child?" or, "Why did God let this curse happen?" We expect a lot from God but do we expect a lot from ourselves?

A curse is also forged in expectations. We desire to win at all costs. The poor gambler lost it all but lady luck was not on their side. Maybe they were in the wrong place doing the wrong thing to begin with. Think about it. We pray for what reason? We need money for many reasons. He wants healing for what reason? We have expectations and a blessing is deserved. Yet, in the Bible, a curse is said to be a good thing by Paul. It's a lesson on how to be grateful when things go well, and when they do not. It's also a lesson that fire is hot.

The idea *there are a thousand ways not to make a lightbulb* is never wasted time. The answer is hidden in failure. I read a story by Joshua Harris (author and pastor) where he was

Blessings and curses: Chapter 7 "Curses"

reduced to disappointment in a closet. Within that tight space was his heart. What an image. He created expectations that made his life a tight space. He wanted a certain girl but she rejected him. Rejection is not what he desired. Ironically, his future wife was sitting right outside that tight space. What God taught him was that the answer to his desires were outside of his own self-made space.

A curse is self made for the most part. Oh, I know you automatically disbelieve that. People seem to have bad luck. I guess the Jews had bad luck in the concentration camps. Maybe, but maybe there is more to bad luck. Maybe the Jewish nation could have loved the German people more in the years preceding the death camps. Maybe all their wealth made a picture within the minds of the German people. Hitler preyed on the perception forged by the perception within the Jewish community. That was played out on derogatory posters in Germany depicting the Jews as money-grabbing monsters.

That seems uncalled for. The Jewish people did not ever deserve the fate they received. No they did not, but they did have actions and choices while sin was crouched at their door. I do know that in the end many of them were more loving and more grateful on the outside of Auschwitz. Were they cursed? Was the army of Hitler blessed? In the end Hitler was doomed and the Jewish nation survived. The anger and jealousy in the hearts of the German people took them down. Ironically, the Jewish people never hated the Germans after the war. Love was forged in a hard lesson allowed by God.

So often we say God has no right to be seemingly cruel with our lives. Yet, what would it have taken to convince me to not marry my first wife? Five people telling me "don't do it" never sunk in. Their good intentions and wisdom were not enough. A divorce 11 years later was all I

Blessings and curses: Chapter 7 "Curses"

needed to open my eyes. Harsh, uncalled for, but it was the path I chose. I bare the scars of my own curse that I created. Unfortunately, I could not see how that curse went forward affecting others as well: ask my children.

Deep within the ashes can be found a blessing. I have said in this book that a blessing is a curse that needs time to blossom. A curse is a blessing that needs time to grow. We make choices to hurry up time. We desire more money so we gamble. We could have opened a bank account and saved money over time. We desire the best mate. We could wait patiently for the right one. How often does that happen? Are we in a rush to be happy? Maybe that causes more curses than blessings?

I went through divorce and have the scars to prove it. Anne Frank was a Holocaust victim who never deserved death. My only reason for even mentioning this tragedy in history is to show the true heart of a victim. Anne's diary survived the concentration camp. The lessons from God did too. Read this from Anne. **"If we bear all this suffering and if there are still Jews left, when it is over, then Jews, instead of being doomed, will be held up as an example. Who knows, it might even be our religion from which the world and all peoples learn good, and for that reason and that reason alone do we have to suffer now."**

Jesus said himself that he came for the Jews alone. Because they were a blessed people deserving Jesus more than the rest of us? No, they were the people chosen by God as an example of God's work to the world. In that evil camp Anne Frank stared straight into the eyes of God before she died and understood. A curse is never a curse. It's only the seeds of a blessing waiting for a chance to grow. That's not comforting advice for those in trouble, but it's also a beacon of hope.



Blessings and curses: Chapter 7 "Curses"

After my divorce I have loved more. I have lived more. I could have hated more. Eeyore in the Winnie the Poo story looks for curses. A person who commits suicide isn't looking for hope. They might believe hope is gone. I knew a great lady who was dying of cancer. For years she fought this curse. At her funeral, there were many hospital staff sitting there in tears because she had been a bright light in their lives. My friend refused to die with a curse. She turned it into a blessing for so many others. That is the good work of God.

King David writes in Psalm 30: **You, Lord, brought me up from the realm of the dead; you spared me from going down to the pit. Sing the praises of the Lord, you his faithful people; praise his holy name. For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.**" The people closest to God's curses have felt his blessings. Hindsight is 20/20. They know how the blessings come: after a violent storm. They knew when the storm passes they might survive. Lessons are learned in the aftermath of chaos.

Is getting cancer a curse? Did you deserve it? Is a gas chamber a curse? Did the Jewish people deserve it? I get blessings of money and curses of bills. Some of these blessings and curses we seem to deserve, and others appear to be fate. I saved money and bought a car with cash. That was fun. That decision to save money years before gave me the money to start over after my divorce settlement. I have only one ear to hear out of. I probably love music more than most because I barely hear anything. You never truly appreciate life until it's taken from you.

The strive for blessings is an addiction we can't live without. Take a look at this list of blessings: **Money, sex, being wanted, significance in this world, music, trips, family, dreams, careers, drugs, cars, planes, and many more things.** All of these things are blessings. They

Blessings and curses: Chapter 7 "Curses"

can all be curses too. We see what we desire and put horse blinders on. It's all we see and all we think about. Do we miss other blessings because of those blinders? I feel it's like a game show with three doors to choose. We know the car is behind door number one, yet what is behind the other two?

I loved to smoke. A long walk with a smoke is the best. Smoking causes cancer so they say. I love a drink but drinking kills. Cars are awesome but drinking and driving is very bad. We desire many things and we are willing to chance life to get them. We heap curses upon ourselves because we desire the blessing. A bill might be a curse. Avoiding the bill might be a far worse fate. Seeking our desires is fine, but at the cost of a curse?

Our actions can invite disaster but that's not always true. In the movie Titanic, Jack says he is blessed while sitting with fine people eating a fine meal on a fine ship. That is a blessing. The ship was cursed but Jack didn't know that at the time. In fact, the ship was cursed before he even thought about entering the boat. Oddly enough he won that cruise ticket in a card game; found a life long love; and lost his life all on the same trip. Blessings and curses make strange bed fellows. We perceive what curses are. We desire blessings because we know what they are. Outside of all this is something playing a seemingly dirty trick on us? A blessing is a curse and a curse is a blessing.

I talked briefly about prayer in the last chapter, but let's take it a step farther. I'd like to examine prayer and curses. I remember watching The Exorcist. The priest prayed and lost. I get the feeling the movie was made to prove that prayer and God don't work in times of trouble. Hollywood loves to kill hope and faith. Oddly enough the little actress Linda Blair in that movie lived a cursed life ever since that film. There might be forces we should not mess with.

Blessings and curses: Chapter 7 "Curses"

Prayer is meant to be a communication with God. Is God required to answer prayer? The Bible says God will never leave or forsake us if we are his children. So we pray and expect help. We are good and expect blessings. Honestly, we expect bad things to befall bad people. Hitler is cursed just like Judas was, right? Those who don't talk to God will not get God's attention so they say.

I love J Vernon McGee (an American preacher). He has said at times that God does not help those who are not his children. He is under no obligation. Obligation? Is God obligated to save you? There are two answers to this. But before I do, let's have a small chat on expectations. They are those things we deserve because we were good.

Religious people expect things from the God they serve. I guy I know expects he is predestined for heaven. A pastor is right in his actions because God chose him for leadership. A ministry is blessed because money is good. I have heard all kinds of religious people say these things. They are fools. That is not the God they serve. The only real expectation is that God will always act consistently the same way.

Years ago I hated everything about God. At one point I prayed to Him to save my marriage. It appears to me that God listened to my prayer even though I did not believe. Did God hear my prayer because I was predestined for heaven even though I once hated Him? If I did not believe in God, then why did God answer my prayer? Let's get back to the two answers about God and his obligation to answer prayer.

One, is that "Yes" God is obligated to answer. Why? Well it's because that is his character. By His nature He is compelled to bless. It goes back to Paul's observation in Romans 5. God seems to bless all the more when we sin. You see, God loves first and hates only what

Blessings and curses: Chapter 7 "Curses"

can't be loved. God will always try to love till the death. Jesus loved and tried to bless, but in the end evil chose to kill him. God does not work the same way.

The only unpardonable sin is unbelief. If you choose to hate God and not believe in Jesus, then, in time, you will die without God. Until your last breath, the love of God is waiting for you. I have heard it said that hell is really the absence of God. It is a harsh lesson to know what life is like without the presence of God. It feels at times that we have been thrown to the fire instead. Still, within the fire, remains the love of God. That is why we pray. We know deep down His character is to love first. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1, "Love never fails."

The second reason God is obligated is because he wants to. Okay, Patrick isn't that the same thing? No. God by nature is built on loving. He is love, in a sense. In Christian circles I have heard it said that we are commanded to love and give. I hate that. So, if we are not commanded then we are not obligated? Let's say God made a command that He has to love. The flip side is God choosing to love without a command to do so? God instead chooses to love because he can without a shred of obligation.

I have been blessed with a job and money. I give because I can. They say 95 percent of the church body does give the commanded 10 percent tithe. There is an argument of what to give, but they all say we are obligated to give like Jesus. I give because, in my heart, it's the right thing to do. I give to those who seemed cursed, so that a blessing might arise. That is why God listens and responds to prayer, so that a blessing might arise. At times it appears God is not answering. I say He always answers but we are not patient or listening. My prayer to God was to help me in my failed marriage. Divorce was His answer. Not a great answer but an answer,

Blessings and curses: Chapter 7 "Curses"

nonetheless. How often do we pray for a curse to end before it's time? We will do anything to avoid curses.

This thing called prayer is not only a religious thing. I know people who don't believe in God, yet they pray. We all know what to do when curses come. Prayer is somehow connected to curses. Maybe when things get personal we tend to ask for help. The avenue to God is through prayer. He loves to love. Sometimes though He needs us to feel a little uneasy or a little pain. Maybe that is how we get a little more open to prayer. It's possible we might hear better too when it's personal.

Have you ever heard a song and thought it said something quite different than the real words? I do it all the time. This was a good one. I quoted earlier that Adele wrote in a song, **"Sometimes it lasts in love but sometimes it hurts instead."** I thought she said, "Sometimes the lesson learned is sometimes it hurts instead." I like both of them even if I need a hearing aide. This is my heart on curses in a nutshell.

I don't care for Mr. and Mrs. Happy all the time. Sometimes life hurts. However, I believe a curse is a good thing. I drive better because of my cursed driving years. I love better because I bled through divorce. Sometimes the lesson learned is that a curse is required. Why, God only knows. I think telling us the truth rarely sinks in. The Good Witch Glenda, in the Wizard of Oz, said Dorothy needed to find out the answers for herself. Lessons are information, but experience is the truth. A fire is too hot only when you burn yourself.

The Bible is clear that curses are blessings in disguise. God uses all things like Paul says in Romans 8: **"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him."** God will seemingly curse his children. God will bless when we sin. God says our ways are

Blessings and curses: Chapter 7 "Curses"

not His ways. We don't win every prize, battle, and desire. In a perfect world maybe, but not in God's world.

Some say we had a choice to remain in Eden in the beginning. I struggle with that. How do we learn if it's not through trials and curses? Where is the fun in being safe from life's hard lessons forever? There are statements in the Bible that talk about a refiner's fire. Have you ever wondered why we have to go through this whole mess just to get to heaven? Maybe God is refining us to be more like Him. To see things through different eyes.

So many blessings have come through curses and failures. How could we ignore that fact? The sad part is when we fail to hope for blessings. We fail to see good in our world. Bad things happen that we call curses. Are they curses or do we name them that? A little pain can go a long way. That's the way we were made. We are supposed to help God turn curses into blessings.

Romans 8:17: **"Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."** Anne Frank said her people were supposed to be the good. Then be the good. Do the right thing. A curse is good because good will come from it. There is always something to be learned in all things. A blessing may be short lived but a curse turned into a blessing can go a long way. Be patient with the curses in your life. Give hope a place to stand, and a curse a chance to grow into a special blessing filled with meaning and purpose.