

From Blessing to Curse

By Ron MacDonald



One of the greatest dilemmas of a God who loves to bless us as He does is that like immature children, we become captured by the blessings and miss the Father's heart. At the end of the Old Testament, Malachi revealed the coming of a great provision for the people that was destined to heal the poisoned relationship between Father and mankind. As the very last words before four hundred years of silence, the Father revealed His heart—He was about to send His Son who would heal the broken families of this world. The next word God would speak would be clothed in human flesh, sent to suffer and die so those who believed in Christ could be reconciled with Him. Jesus told Nicodemus “As Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life”.¹ Jesus, who did not sin, became sin upon that cross, that all that look to him may be healed and reconciled with Father. God provided for those who were rebellious, even as they were walking in His gift of freedom, but were bitten by the snakes God Himself sent as a curse. Just as within Moses' great prophetic picture of the cross resided a warning that was revealed five hundred years later, that warning still remains with us to this day.

Five hundred years had passed since Moses led them to their new homeland, but as would happen again and again, God's people seemed unable to receive the fulness of the blessings born from His great love. A good king, Hezekiah set about to restore the focus again upon Father, and it is recorded² that, "He removed the high places and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah³. He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it; and it was called Nehushtan⁴." What once had been an anointed and prophetic provision of healing had itself become a corrupted object of worship, and an insult to Father. It was a blessing when it was filled with the Lord's love, but once divorced from that, it was doubly cursed, for being empty of love, it became only an object of man's fleshly affection. What had once been a great blessing had become a curse. Grace that seems so freely and easily obtainable from Christ does not minimize the horrendous evil of the curse, it only covers it over for those "in Christ". Death and corruption still remain for those not His.

Paul, in the New Testament reminded the Church that, "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator - who is forever praised."⁵ Addressing **other Churches**, Paul rebuked those who turned from the Father to worship angels and visions, even those things that at times and other places had been instruments of blessing and His provision. We, after these millennia still just don't get it; how easy it is to grasp and hold dearly to the tangible and visible provisions God gives us; ignoring the very heart that, although unseen, works in us its deep power covering those deceptive forces of evil that still corrupt creation. Everything is not yet under God's rule and government, including the ways of His people. Even God's "chosen people" were "cut off" from the Father's tree of life, and we also have been warned that as Gentile nations, we too could find ourselves without Him, left alone with the curse within the soil we have chosen to give ourselves to and serve.⁶

The writer in Hebrews tells us, "See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven. And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN." This expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us

show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire.”⁷ This was written **to the Church**, and yet we live our lives casually, forgetting the “candlesticks” that were removed from the churches listed in the beginning chapters of Revelation. Perhaps the spiritual draught within America that is becoming painfully obvious is because we have become accustomed to giving our hearts and minds to other Nehushtans.⁸

The Epistles have spoken of things that would plague the Church before the culmination of the Ages. A list of the symptoms given within the New Testament of the troubles and failings of Christians would triple the size of this article, but that which stands out above all others is that our first love would grow cold and be lost. Yes, this is the great terrible cause, the rest are symptoms. You have probably heard it said that the enemy of *best* is not *bad*, but *good*. Blessings are good and to be welcomed, but they are also dangerous, for mixed with our flesh they can become curses. Perhaps there is another way to summarize the overall list of those almost innumerable symptoms.

I would suggest that they reside within the Institutions and their teachings we have established to collect and “squirrel away” our blessings. Buildings and structures are not bad things, they are good and useful, as are programs, plans, goals, wise financial stewardship, signs and wonders, martyrdom, moral and healthy cultural influence, and even compassion for the poor and hungry. Yet they all are Nehushtan—brassy things without the love of Father. You know this. You have read it in 1 Cor 13, or at least heard it at weddings. It was the religious institutions of the Hebrews that competed for the people’s hearts, and the very instruments of blessing became a curse—and so it is in the United States today. Praying for God to pour out His blessings in these days is just not going to do it; our hearts toward Father must change.

This is not new “news”, for it seems we continually repeated this pattern throughout history. It also seems true that this occurs most when God’s people are the most blessed, and America has been greatly favored. This is the dilemma God has to have in that, as the very nature of His love, it cannot be forced.⁹ How can our Father pour out His mighty and transforming love without injuring us?

A.B. Simpson wrote a hymn about it, as well as a message to his generation. See: http://www.biblebelievers.com/simpson-ab_himself.html :

HIMSELF

by A. B. Simpson

*Once it was the blessing, Now it is the Lord;
Once it was the feeling, Now it is His Word.
Once His gifts I wanted, Now the Giver own;
Once I sought for healing, Now Himself alone.*

*Once 'twas painful trying, Now 'tis perfect trust;
Once a half salvation, Now the uttermost.
Once 'twas ceaseless holding, Now He holds me fast;
Once 'twas constant drifting, Now my anchor's cast.*

*Once 'twas busy planning, Now 'tis trustful prayer;
Once 'twas anxious caring, Now He has the care.
Once 'twas what I wanted, Now what Jesus says;
Once 'twas constant asking, Now 'tis ceaseless praise.*

*Once it was my working, His it hence shall be;
Once I tried to use Him, Now He uses me.
Once the power I wanted, Now the Mighty One;
Once for self I labored, Now for Him alone.*

*Once I hoped in Jesus, Now I know He's mine;
Once my lamps were dying, Now they brightly shine.
Once for death I waited, Now His coming hail;
And my hopes are anchored, Safe within the veil.*

Ron MacDonald

Painting by Judith Mehr was modified for this publication.

¹ John 3:14-15, cf Nu 21:4-9

² 2 Kings 18:4

³ cultish worship groves in the wooded areas.

⁴ meaning *a brassy thing*.

⁵ Romans 1:25 NIV

⁶ Romans 11:22

⁷ Hebrews 12:25-29

⁸ This teaching was first brought to my attention by David Ebaugh in the beginning of the Charismatic Movement. They didn't "get it" either.

⁹ See my exposition of *Song of Solomon*, www.scripturewise.com, which is centered around unenforceable love..