

God's Blessings and Curses

Joshua 6:22-27

Preached by Phillip Kayser at DCC on Wednesday, January 18th 2023

I. Introduction - a theological background of what the Bible says about curses and blessings

In today's passage we are going to be looking at God's blessings and His cursings. It's a very important topic, and a hugely neglected topic. There are several Hebrew¹ and Greek² words for blessings and curses, and those words occur hundreds of times, and when you study them you realize that they are not mere words, wishes, prayers, or hopes. No. There is a supernatural power that goes to the thing being blessed or cursed.

When God blessed the creation in Genesis 1, it produced all kinds of good things. When He cursed the creation in Genesis 3, it produced thorns and thistles and death. In fact, Romans 8 says that God's curse resulted in the whole creation being subjected to futility, bondage, corruption, groaning, and laboring. OK, we can understand that. God backs up His own curses, and He can reverse His own curses. His law speaks of the process by which the land can be healed of the curse that comes from blood-guilt. OK. That is all understandable.

But what about the blessings and curses of men? Surely those don't have power do they? Well, on their own they don't. But demons can take advantage of sinful curses, and if a curse is consistent with God's will, God can send angels to back up those curses. And whether demons enforce curses and blessings or whether elect angels do so, there is a literal power behind all true blessings and cursings. Please turn to Luke 10 to see the power behind both. Before we dive into Joshua 6 again, I want to give a little historical background on this important subject. Luke 10. In verse 1 Jesus sends out seventy disciples to evangelize. These are not the apostles. These are 70 evangelists. We will pick up at verse 5. Jesus tells them,

5 But whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace to this house." 6 And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you.

Let's just stop there for a minute. When they pronounced the blessing of shalom upon the house, there was something that went from them to the house, and if no son of peace (or believer) was in the house, the peace would return to them. That indicates something

¹ The main Hebrew words for curse are אָרַר, קָלַל, קָלְלָהּ, קָבַב, מָאַרָה. These words occur 197x in 174 verses.

² The main Greek words for curse are καταράομαι, κατάρα, κακολογέω, καταθεματίζω, ἀναθεματίζω, ἀναθεμα, ἀναθεωρεω, ἀρα, κατάρα, κατάθεμα, καταναθεμα, καταναθαματίζω. These words occur 84x in 82 verses.

traveling to the house and back. How that happens, I am not entirely sure, but it may be that angels carried the blessing there. So that is the blessing. He goes on in verse 7:

7 And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house. 8 Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. 9 And heal the sick there, and say to them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." 10 But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 11 "The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you." 12 But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city.

Luke 10:13 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. 15 And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades. 16 He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me."

Luke 10:17 Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."

Luke 10:18 And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. 20 Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

So this blessing and cursing had something to do with battles between demons and good angels. And humans were a part of the equation.

But let's dig a little bit deeper into this subject. What about curses from pagans? Are those empty? Well, it depends. God didn't just ignore Balaam's attempt to curse Israel. He went to great lengths to prevent such curses from happening and Nehemiah says, "God turned the curse into a blessing." That seems to indicate that something would have happened if God had not intervened. The point is that God took that demonic curse seriously, and he stopped its power. When the enemies of Christ curse us, it is important to reject the curse in the name and authority of God. Psalm 109 says,

17 As he loved cursing, so let it come to him; as he did not delight in blessing, so let it be far from him. 18 As he clothed himself with cursing as with his garment, so let it enter his body like water, And like oil into his bones. 19 Let it be to him like the garment which covers him, And for a belt with which he girds himself continually.

And there are other passages that indicate that demonic curses need to be renounced. By the way, demonic *blessings* also need to be renounced and replaced. Watch out who you get a blessing from. A lot of people don't realize the dangers involved in blessings. People who have had a shaman lay hands on them to bless them have been plagued with demons from

that time on. Shortly after Bill Clinton got inaugurated into the office of President, Hillary Clinton was blessed by an Indian Shaman. It's a common practice for people to receive powers in this way. Mark Bubeck's book, *The Adversary*, and his second book, *Overcoming the Adversary*, both document people who have received unusual powers through a demonic blessing, yet they were also in bondage to those demons from that point on. Once God delivered them, they were freed from both the unusual powers and from the bondage.

So there are both good blessings and curses and bad blessings and curses. Satan is an imitator and counterfeiter of God. I'll just give you one example. Just as God gave the gift of tongues, we saw witchdoctors out in Ethiopia who would speak in languages they had not learned (like German, English, and other languages) and it happened immediately after they called upon demons to fill them. But so-called Christian pastors have also often conferred demonic powers to people after blessing them. I'm talking about *heretical* pastors, not good ones. And I'll just share one story. I had a friend who couldn't pray normally anymore after he was blessed by a Oneness Pentecostal pastor by the laying on of hands. And we discovered it when my dad asked him to pray at the dinner table. He said that he couldn't, and then he started to cry. He said that he had not been able to pray normally ever since the Oneness Pentecostal pastor had laid hands on him to bless him. All that would come out was something he didn't understand. My dad encouraged him to go ahead and pray anyway, and that he would test the spirit (as the Bible commands us to do in 1 John 4:1). When he started praying in tongues my dad asked him if Jesus Christ had come in the flesh. He tried to say yes, but a voice out of his belly said "No." My dad cast out the demon and he lost his gift of tongues. Mark Bubeck has had to deliver a number of people from demonic tongues as well - and he is a charismatic. So this is not a charismatic versus non-charismatic point that I am making. The point is, don't allow people you don't trust to bless you. We live in a supernatural world that is filled with good angels of God and evil demons of Satan, and both worlds have blessings and cursings.

Several scholars have pointed out that you have no covenant without both blessings and curses. It's because of the covenant that the curses of this chapter came upon Israel in the next chapter. When God established the covenant in Deuteronomy 27, he presented both blessings and curses. There are some passages where the word for "blessing" or "curse" is a metonymy for the *whole* covenant - or some people call it a synecdoche, where a part of the covenant stands for the whole. Well, it can't be a synecdoche unless it is essential to the covenant. For example, Zechariah 5:3 speaks of the scroll of the covenant and calls that scroll "the curse." God's covenant is also called "the blessing" (for example, Psalm 133:3; Gal. 3:14; etc.). Anyway, it is an essential component of the covenant. And it is astounding to me that there are not more covenant theologians who take seriously the reality of curses in their covenant theology. Curses are dangerous things whether the power behind those curses is God or Satan. And blessings are powerful things.

Those who have had demonic blessings and curses need to have those reversed by renouncing them and receiving the protection of Christ who received all our curses for us. In any case, curses are real. When someone curses you, don't just laugh it off. Reject the curse (I do so out loud) and ask God's blessing to reverse it - or even to ask God to curse those who curse you. If you have thought that curses or blessings are empty words, I would encourage you to read Derek Prince's book, *Blessing Or Curse*, or Robert Fugate's book,

Biblical Curses: Divine & Demonic, or my paper on *Negative Thinking*, or Robert Fugate's book on *Biblical Imprecations*.

The modern church has been way too influenced by scientific materialism and it is skeptical of such things. But you can't read through the whole Bible without realizing that curses and blessings are more than just empty words. OK, enough by way of introduction. Let's dive into Joshua 6 again.

II. Blessings

A. The blessing of Rahab - individual salvation (v. 22)

We'll start with the blessings in this chapter. Verse 22 says,

But Joshua had said to the two men who had spied out the country, "Go into the harlot's house, and from there bring out the woman and all that she has, as you swore to her."

With faith there automatically comes the first blessing of salvation. She was spared the curse that came on Jericho and was ushered into the riches of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was an instantaneous blessing that God wrought by His Holy Spirit.

Brandon tells how he went from *not* seeing God in *anything* to suddenly at his conversion seeing God in *absolutely everything*. God quickens this blessing with His very presence. It is the most awesome blessing of all.

But did you know that the only way any of us could have received the blessing of salvation was if Jesus had already borne the curse in our place? This is how central this subject is. This is vividly portrayed in Genesis 15 when God covenanted with Abraham in order to bless him. Abraham cut the animals that he was sacrificing in half. The purpose for that was to walk between the pieces. That's why they call it "cutting the covenant." And walking between the pieces of the animal was a symbolic way of saying that if he broke the covenant, he would be cursed and cut off just like those animals were. But instead of letting Abraham walk between the pieces of the animal, God appeared to him in a fiery theophany, and *God Himself* passed between those pieces (v. 17). God was bearing the curses of the covenant on behalf of Abraham. And that is the perfect picture of what Jesus did when He died for us and had God's wrath poured out upon Him on the cross. Galatians 3:13 says that He became a curse for us. That passage indicates that blessings and curses are central to the covenant. That's why Rahab was spared God's judgment on Jericho. The scarlet cord that hung outside of her window was her symbolic token of faith in the coming shed blood of her future Messiah. Salvation is an awesome blessing that reverses the ultimate curse.

B. The protection of her house (v. 22)

The second blessing mentioned in verse 22 was the physical protection of her house. They were able to go *into* the harlot's house because her *house itself* did not collapse with the rest of the wall. It was spared. It was blessed. Keep in mind that her house was built into

the wall. That means that the only portion of the wall that didn't tumble down was the place where her house was.

And of course, that was part of what the spies made her promise in Joshua 2:17-19. Let me read that.

Josh. 2:17 So the men said to her: "We will be blameless of this oath of yours which you have made us swear, 18 unless, when we come into the land, you bind this line of scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you bring your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your father's household to your own home. 19 So it shall be that whoever goes outside the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we will be guiltless. And whoever is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head if a hand is laid on him.

There was a protection of her home and all who were in the home. Don't overlook that important concept of making your home a sanctuary from demonic curses. Your houses can be places of refuge from demonic attack.

I encourage parents to walk around their house and anoint the doors of the house with oil and to pray a prayer something along the lines of this:

"Lord, I dedicate this house to you. Just as the Israelites applied the blood of lambs to their houses, I apply Christ's blood to this house and give it unreservedly to Him. Whatever sins have given demons access to this house, I put them under the blood of Christ, and I claim the protection of Christ's Passover blood. Please send your warrior angels to escort all demons out. They no longer have legal ground here. This is your house. We dedicate it unreservedly to you. Would you now set a guard before this house."

You see, we have the legal right to appeal to Christ's blood when demons attack. Christ's cross disarmed principalities and powers according to Colossians 2:15. It was the basis for destroying all the works of the devil according to 1 John 3:8. So there is a defensive aspect to the blood.

And it's interesting how demonized people can tell the difference. I'll share just one testimony. We invited a demonized woman to our house and when she walked through the doors, I saw her eyes snap and become soft, and she said, "Oh, it's so peaceful in here." There was a complete change of her countenance the moment she walked through the door. We knew exactly why. We had asked God to establish angelic sentries at all entry points to our house and not allow demons in. And if people entering the house had demons, we prayed that the angels would force the demons to remain outside. God's blessing can rest on houses and can reverse all curses. Rahab's house escaped the curse on Jericho. It's a very important part of God's covenant blessings.

C. The blessing on all Rahab had (v. 22)

But thirdly, it says that *all that she had* was blessed. She had left behind her harlotry, her religion, and any artifacts that God had cursed from that pagan religion. And that is implied

in verse 23. We will look at that in a bit. But the *rest* of her belongings were spared. God doesn't just bless *people*. He also blesses animals and even inanimate objects that belong to His people. Listen to the following blessings from Scripture.

Genesis 2:3 says, "Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it..." Days and time can be blessed. Have you ever had a day that was absolutely frittered away and you were frustrated because you weren't able to get much of anything done? Maybe its because you didn't ask God to bless your time and your time management.

Genesis 27:27 speaks of God's blessing on a field. Yes, we admit it. We ask God to bless our garden. There is nothing neutral in life. Even your gardening needs God's blessing.

Genesis 39:5 says, "the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had in the house and in the field." Notice it says, "on all that he had..."

Exodus 23:25 says, "He will bless your bread and your water..."

Deuteronomy 33:11 says, "Bless his property..."

Deuteronomy 7:13 speaks of blessing on the womb, grain, wine, oil, cattle, and flocks.

The point is, God loves to bless all that we have if all that we have has been dedicated to Him. Because Rahab belonged to God, lock, stock, and barrel, all that she had was blessed. Isn't that cool? We can claim that blessing. One of my favorite verses for claiming *this* blessing is 3 John 2, which says, "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers."

D. The blessing of Rahab's household - household salvation (v. 23)

The next thing that was blessed and avoided the curse was Rahab's household. Verse 23 says,

And the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, her mother, her brothers, and all that she had. So they brought out all her relatives...

And we'll stop reading there. Notice that this influence of the blessing went to father, mother, and to her brothers. They had no doubt pimped her out. They too were guilty as sin. Yet God saved them on account of her. And we too can claim these blessings for ourselves. 1 Corinthians 7:14 says that the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife. The same passage sets aside the children as sanctified to the Lord. In Luke 19:9 Jesus said to the tax collector, "Today salvation *has come to this house*, because he also is a son of Abraham." Acts 11:14 says, "who will tell you words by which you *and all your household will be saved*." Acts 16:31 says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you *and your household*." When God blesses, there is power in that blessing, and it is important that we not nullify such blessings by pronouncing negative affirmations that kill our faith, such as affirming that our family is hopeless. No, you Can't do that. If there was ever a hopeless family, it would have been the pimps in Rahab's family, yet she believed God's blessing.

They of course had to affirm their *own* belief in God by staying in her house. If they had left, they would have come under the curse. And conversely, if they had identified with the gods of Jericho and the perversions of Jericho, they would not have been welcome in the home. But let's focus on the blessing. You too can claim blessings for your household.

E. The process of ensuring no curse continues (v. 23b)

But let's look at the last phrase of verse 23. Reading the whole verse again:

And the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, her mother, her brothers, and all that she had. So they brought out all her relatives and left them outside the camp of Israel.

Why would they be left outside the camp of Israel? After all, Hebrews is quite clear that Rahab was already a believer, and simple logic shows that all of them were believers. Well, there is a good reason - a reason that always applied to all converts. Both Jewish and Christian commentaries³ point out that the law of God required lepers and Gentiles to live outside the camp until the priests could determine if they were qualified for membership in the assembly. This would involve instruction, getting rid of anything occult, the males getting circumcised, and all of them getting baptized. Ezekiel later speaks of this process being applied to *many* Gentiles and them then receiving proselyte baptism. It was the very process that John the Baptist used with excommunicated Israel - they went through the same conversion process and the same training that pagans went through and then received proselyte baptism. None of that is mentioned here, but is implied when we learn in verse 25 that she became a full Israelite later. But before that could happen, the law required that they had to remain outside the camp to ensure that there had been a complete cutting off of their pagan past. It was only then that they could join the synagogue and nation.⁴

³ See for example, Gordon D. Fee and Robert L. Hubbard Jr., eds., *The Eerdmans Companion to the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 174–176. Lissa M. Wray Beal, Joshua, ed. Tremper Longman III, *The Story of God Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2019), 140. Gary H. Everett, *The Book of Joshua, Study Notes on the Holy Scriptures* (Gary Everett, 2011), 36. John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, *The Baptist Commentary Series* (London: Mathews and Leigh, 1810), 201. Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 1 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 147. Karl Friedrich Keil, *Commentary on the Book of Joshua*, trans. James Martin, vol. XIV, Clark's Foreign Theological Library (Edinburgh; London; Dublin: T&T Clark; Hamilton, Adams & Co.; Simpkin, Marshall, and Co.; John Robertson, and Hodges and Smith, 1857), 171–172. Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 2 (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1976), 199. Etc.

⁴ See above commentaries. As John Gill words it, "left them without the camp of Israel; until they became proselytes, and embraced the religion of Israel, as Kimchi remarks. However, being Gentiles, some external rites and ceremonies were to be performed upon them, as

And by the way, this is one of many reasons why we require that people be members in good standing in some evangelical church before they come to communion. They might be believers like Rahab was. Rahab was a believer even while she was outside the camp, and she had to remain outside the camp until it could be demonstrated that she and her family met the conditions for joining. Hebrews dealt with Jewish people who claimed to belong to God but who did not meet these qualifications, and Hebrews 13:10 says, "We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat." The right to eat at the Lord's Table is not automatic for professing believers. But that's a total side-trail, and I want to get back to the main point of the blessing.

Why do I call this temporary separation of Rahab and her family outside the camp a blessing? It was a blessing because it ensured that none of Canaanite life and occultism made it past their conversion, and doing that was a protection of the family. And any one of us can inadvertently give legal ground to demons to curse us - even though we are believers. It happened to Achan in the next chapter. And let me give our own personal testimony of this. My wife doesn't mind my sharing this story. Our family gave legal ground to demons to come into our house one time when my wife accepted a hospitality gift into the home that was an idol. I was away on a trip. She was planning to throw it away later, but it came into the home. What had happened was that a new student from Korea had given us a house-warming gift. The guest told my wife, "This is an idol." I don't remember what Kathy's response was. But by not wanting to be rude and receiving this idol as a gift, demons must have felt that they had an open invitation, even though Kathy had planned to throw it away later. Kathy experienced enormous demonic attack that night and thought she was dying. It was super frightening. She immediately recognized what was happening, and called upon the Lord Jesus and claimed His blood to deliver her. Later she called me, we prayed over the house to protect it from demonic attachments of that Korean, and she got rid of the legal ground. But the point is that it is a blessing to take the time to ensure that nothing of Canaan makes it into the camp of Israel. When Presbyterians put hedges around the Lord's Table and require certain prerequisites, we do so to protect those people from eating unworthily and eating judgment to their soul. But we also want to protect the church, because when those people eat, they are doing so in covenant with us. If they have demonic attachments, it could potentially give legal ground for demons to harrass our congregation. I've spent a little bit more time on that because that question has come up. There is a Biblical basis for the practice of hedging the table.

F. The blessing of Rahab's future - covenant succession (v. 25 with Matt. 1:1-17)

The next blessing is listed in verse 25:

well as a declaration at least of their renouncing idolatry was required of them, before they could be admitted into the camp of Israel; and which was required even of a proselyte of the gate, or of one that was only a sojourner among them." John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, *The Baptist Commentary Series* (London: Mathews and Leigh, 1810), 201.

And Joshua spared Rahab the harlot, her father's household, and all that she had. So she dwells in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

Just as a sidenote, the phrase, "So she dwells in Israel to this day" shows that Joshua was not written hundreds of years later, as liberals claim. Rahab was still alive when it was written. It was written by Joshua.

But that same phrase hints at her full acceptance. We later learn that she married Salmon, and her descendants included Boaz, King David, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Having the true faith pass on from generation to generation is an amazing blessing from the Lord. And if the Lord blesses, nothing but lack of faith or rebellion can reverse that. Deuteronomy 7:9 speaks of God as being "the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments." Praise God.

G. The blessing of Joshua (v. 27)

And finally, verse 27 speaks of God's blessing on Joshua.

So the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout all the country.

Ultimately the blessing of the Lord is the presence of the Lord in our lives. You cannot successfully seek His blessing without seeking *Him*. Psalm 119:2 says, "Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart!" Do you seek the Lord with your whole heart? If so, have faith that He loves to bless you. And you will see His blessings in every area of life. Why? Because His supernatural power backs up those blessings.

III. Curses

A. The destruction of Jericho protected Israel (v. 24)

But we come next to the curse found in verses 24 and 26. The destruction of Jericho in verse 24 was because its demonic culture had finally come under God's curse. God conscripted Israel to fulfil the curse by destroying it. This was not normal warfare. As we saw last week Israel was not allowed to do this without God's inspired revelation to carry out His judgments. But I'll just quickly deal with verse 24.

But they burned the city and all that was in it with fire. Only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD.

As I mentioned in the last sermon, the gold, silver, and vessels were purified with fire. Since I already explained this, I won't say more, except to say that it is a fearful thing for a nation to come under God's curse. This is why we should work hard to bring America to repentance. Apart from repentance our own nation is going down a slippery slope into judgment.

B. Joshua's curse of Jericho anticipates future challenges (v. 26)

But I want to end with Joshua's interesting curse on anyone who rebuilds Jericho. Verse 26 says,

Then Joshua charged them at that time, saying, "Cursed be the man before the LORD who rises up and builds this city Jericho; he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates."

This curse found its fulfillment in 1 Kings 16:34. In the previous verses of 1 Kings 16, it says that Ahab did more to provoke God to anger than all the kings of Israel before him. But verse 34 says,

In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation with Abiram his firstborn, and with his youngest son Segub he set up its gates, according to the word of the LORD, which He had spoken through Joshua the son of Nun.

This was how little Hiel valued life. He sacrificed his oldest son to try to gain the blessings of pagan gods when he laid the foundation of the city. He wanted the gods to protect the city. And then he sacrificed his youngest son to the gods in order to try to gain their favor when he set up its gates. Since he was immersed in paganism, he was probably ignorant of this warning in Joshua. But in any case, by seeking the blessing of demons he ended up receiving God's curse. The two are the inverse of each other.

The point is, curses and blessings are inevitable. They happen because we are in the midst of a cosmic war for this world. It is a war between God and His angelic forces and Satan and his demonic forces. We know who will win, but there are a lot of casualties in the process. These casualties are needless if people would once again take seriously the need for protection against the demonic. You don't need to be a casualty. And understanding curses and blessings is an important part of that process. Ignorance is not bliss. It is incredibly dangerous. Hosea 6:4 says,

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you...

But especially notice that first phrase, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Jesus spoke of the religious leaders of His day, saying, "They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch."

Many passages speak of how Satan and his demons can take advantage of our ignorance. May that not be the case with any of us. David said that God had taught his fingers for battle. May God teach us to engage in spiritual battle so that the blessings and imprecations we utter are consistent with His will and carry His power behind them. His blessings can reverse the curses of the enemy. His curses can reverse the demonic blessings of the enemy. Glory in the fact that if God is for us, no one can be against us. Amen.