

Blessings or Curses?

J.I. Wookey spotted a leather bound book when he was searching for scrap metal through a rubbish pile in Lancaster, England several years ago. The binding was smoldering but the pages were in good shape. He tossed it in the back of his car where it remained for seven years until he packed to move to Canada.

After the move a Toronto librarian told Wookey that it might be valuable, so he took it to a New York art dealer. The book proved to be a 300 year old copy of a work by British author, Thomas Traherne. It later sold at auction for \$110, 000.

In the midst of smoldering circumstances it is easy to think that there are no blessings. We may not see the value in our suffering. Yet, there are blessings in the midst of difficult circumstances.

Deuteronomy 8:11-20 (ESV):

¹¹“Take care lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, ¹²lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, ¹³and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, ¹⁴then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, . . . ¹⁷Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ ¹⁸You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. ¹⁹And if you forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish. ²⁰Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God.

Most people, especially American Christians, believe that a sure sign that God is with us is in our physical wealth and blessings. A sign that He is against us would be the opposite. Job’s friends thought Job must have done some vile thing because of the predicament he was in and that God was surely punishing him for it. Otherwise, he would not have lost his wealth, his family, or his health.

Our text in Deuteronomy reveals some important realities. Prosperity is not always a blessing. Trials are not always a curse.

Verse 14 tells us that we can prosper and have numerous blessings and as a result, we can forget God. Again, Moses says:

¹⁴then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God,

Is that really a blessing if we forget God? That’s actually a curse. You see, when we have God we have everything. If we miss out on God, we have nothing, even if we are the financially richest people in the world!

Jesus asks a stirring question in **Matthew 16:26** (ESV):

²⁶For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?

Would you be willing to give up your soul? If so, for what? Our souls are immortal and intended to be with God. How awful to give up that privilege!

By the same token, trials and what we feel may be curses can actually be blessings. Job lost almost everything. He lost his children, his wealth, his health, and in some ways his support group of friends. He

went through his trial in confusion and frustration. When the dust settled, he realized he had been in the presence of God. Instead of a prideful challenge of Him, Job humbled himself before the Lord. He was blessed with the presence of God in the trial.

Moses reminds us in **Deuteronomy 8:17-18** (ESV):

¹⁷ Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ ¹⁸ You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth,

A blessing in our trials is the humility that comes to us. That humility leads us to dependence on God. What could be a greater blessing than having all God wants to provide?

I am grateful that patriots want to “Make America Great Again,” but the key to our greatness is not a robust economy, it’s God. We must depend on God, not ourselves, and certainly not our wealth.

Keep the Light of God’s Presence Burning!