

## The Blessing and the Curse

*"I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse – the blessing, if you obey the commands of the Lord your God... and the curse, if you disobey the commands of the Lord your God." Deuteronomy 11:26-28*

Many Christians think that God is only a God of blessing. However, this is only true if you walk in obedience to His commands. The Bible says the blessing of God is upon those who love and obey Him. However, it is equally true that the curse of God is upon those who do not love and obey Him. Does this sound too severe to you? Yet the Bible says, "Behold the goodness and severity of God: severity to those who fell, but goodness to you, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise, you will also be cut off (Romans 11:22)." It is apparent the way many Christians continue to unrepentantly practice sin that they think only God's blessing now exists for them. This tragic misconception is based on a profound misunderstanding of God's nature and His ways. As Jude wrote, "Now I desire to remind you... that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe (Jude 5)." John the Baptist warned, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him (John 3:36)." And Paul declared, "God's wrath comes upon those who are disobedient... if anyone does not love the Lord – a curse be on him! (Ephesians 5:6; 1 Corinthians 16:22)."

Jesus Himself said that, in the Day of Judgment, He would reject all those who pretended to profess faith in Him but who willfully and unrepentantly practiced sin. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness (Matthew 7:21-23).'" The Bible warns, "For if we go on sinning willfully after

receiving a knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he has been sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' and again, 'The Lord will judge His people.' It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:26-31)." These are not sinners who have never been saved; these are Christians who will lose their salvation because they keep willfully practicing sin. Jesus warned those Christians who practiced sin and "soiled their garments," that unless they repented, He will erase their names from the Book of Life (Revelation 3:5).

This is bad news for those who disobey the Lord and practice sin. However, the good news for all those who believe is this: God's sanctified or holy life – "without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb 12:14) – is entirely possible to live because of Christ's completed work on the cross. According to the gospel, Christ not only died to free us from the penalty of sin, He also died to free us from the power of sin. When we were born again, God immersed us into Christ's death and removed our sinful nature so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin (Romans 6:3-11; Colossians 2:11).

Our salvation must be based on faith in this truth of the cross from beginning to end. Just as we were saved by faith in Christ's completed work on the cross, we must now live by faith in Christ's completed work on the cross. God said, "'My righteous one will live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him.' But we are not those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of our soul (Hebrews 10:38-39)." Since our soul could only be saved by faith in Christ's work on the cross; our soul can also be lost by unbelief in Christ's work

on the cross. "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'Today,' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end (Heb 3:12-14)."

Jesus declared that a great apostasy (the falling away of many from the faith) would mark the time just before His return (Matthew 24:1 & 10)." That apostasy is happening now! When Christians fall away from the faith, it is manifest in two ways. For some, their sins are evident – they are lovers of self, lovers of money and lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. However, the apostasy of many others is cloaked in a false religious morality. These people practice an outward form of "Christianity," but they are inwardly lawless and rebellious to God. They think that as long as they religiously follow so-called "rules of Christianity" (such as going to church and paying their tithes), they are right with God. However, if they do not live by faith in Christ's completed work on the cross, they are lawless and unrighteous in God's eyes. As Jesus said, "On the outside you appear righteous to people, but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness (Matthew 23:28)."

Many Christians believe since they "accepted" Christ at one time, they have an automatic pass into heaven no matter how they live here on earth. However, this is a complete perversion of the gospel. Nothing could be further from the truth! Unless they turn away from their lawlessness (cloaked in a counterfeit Christianity) and practice the sanctification that comes from faith in Christ and His work on the cross, they will be shocked and horrified in the Day of God's Judgment.

*"The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matthew 13:41-42*