

*God's love has
Blessings
and
Curses*

God's Blessings and Curses

There are many ideas getting around as to what a Christian is, so there is a need to put forward clearly what the Bible expects a Christian will look like, and it will be seen this really means they are to be “in Christ” according to His righteousness.

In the beginning God blessed man with His divine image. The first blessing is man's creation in God's image with glory and majesty, and then mans dominion over the whole earth. Man's life was to be a blessing of dominion on earth as God's representative over all living creatures. *‘Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”* Gen 1:26

Further understanding of what that image of God involved was given in the Psalms. *‘What is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him? Yet You have made him a little lower than God, and You crown him with glory and majesty!’* Psalm 8:4-5

We know this first man as Adam the representative of all mankind to come. *“The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL”* (1 Cor 15:45) *“Thus you are to be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine.”* Lev 20:26

When God chose the Jews to be His special people to represent Him, they formed an exclusive community. Their lives were lived in a camp in the desert where God dwelt among them. To be sent outside the camp was to be cursed because it meant being cut off from the provisions of God. To give clear understanding of the conditions of being His special people God made a covenant agreement that contained blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.

The blessing was given with the warning of a curse

‘Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. The LORD God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.” Gen 2:15-17

Satan is cursed first. *“The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you will go, And dust you will eat All the days of your life. And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.”* Gen 3:14-15

Satan may have robbed Adam of his dominion on earth, but his victory will not last forever. Someone from the seed of a woman will come and stand on his head even though He Himself will be bruised on His foot. And when He comes He will see hostility between the seed of Satan through the descendents of Adam and those who are born as a result of the seed from the woman.

With his image damaged because of sin, man is under a curse

Man’s disobedience in eating from the forbidden tree meant the loss of holiness and the blessings and the beginning of the curse because God is love, and He does all things for his glory. Therefore God rules the world in such a way that brings Himself the greatest glory. This means that God must act justly and judge sin with wrath which is seen in curses otherwise God would not be a God who loves His own and is jealous to see they remain holy. God’s love for his glory motivates his wrath against sin. And curses are needed to motivate repentance otherwise sinners wouldn’t care at all for God.

Man is cursed, first in hard labour and also personal conflict, and the world is also cursed. To the woman He said, *“I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you.”* Gen 3:16

Then to Adam He said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; Cursed is the ground because of you; In ^ltoil you will eat of it All the days of your life. “Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.” Gen 3:17--19

Then man and woman were banished from the garden and the presence of God and denied access to the tree of life. *Then the Lord God said,*

“Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”—therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.”

Gen 3:22-24

Man was to live in obedience to God because he was to live by faith that God had his best interest at heart and that God would fulfil all his needs. When he disobeyed God he failed the test of faith. *‘Whatever is not from faith is sin.’*

Rom 14:23

Adam fell from being able to represent God’s holiness so he was unable to stand in the presence of God. *‘Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish.’*

Psalms 1:5-6

We are hiding from the seriousness of sin if we don't accept the dire consequences of betraying God. Sin is a curse. Sin has its own curse because it excludes man from the presence of our holy God. And as a result of man's sin he is but flesh and the whole world remains under a curse. When the law of the covenant was given by God it was given under the curse and contained blessings and curses. The Curses would overtake every aspect of life.

“But it shall come about, if you do not obey the Lord your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:“

Deut 28:15

They would be cursed in the city; cursed in the country; in their food; cursed in their offspring and the harvest, cursed with their livestock. The curse will be in coming in and going out. The curse will cause confusion and rebuke. Everything will be cursed until you are destroyed. The curse will bring pestilence. The curse will give consumption and fever with inflammation. The curse will bring suffering from sword and mildew will rot their belongings. Rain will fail and the earth be hard. Enemies will defeat them and take them away. Their carcasses will be food to the birds and the beasts. The Lord

will give you boils and tumours with scab and itch which you cannot heal. They will be struck with madness and with blindness and a bewilderment of heart. They will not prosper, and be oppressed and robbed continually. The wife will be violated by another. He will build a house but you will not live in it. They will plant but not eat of your crop. Their sheep shall be given to your enemies. Their sons and daughters will be given to other people. They will be driven mad by the sight of their calamity. The LORD will strike you on the knees and legs with sore boils. They will plant much but gather in little, for the locust will consume the harvest. The alien shall rule over them and they will go down lower and lower. He shall be the head, and you will be the tail.

“So all these curses shall come on you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you would not obey the LORD your God by keeping His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you.”

Deut 28:45

“If you are not careful to observe all the words of this law which are written in the book, to fear this honoured and awesome name, the Lord your God, then the LORD will bring extraordinary plagues on you and your descendants, even severe and lasting plagues, and miserable and chronic sicknesses.”

Deut 28:58-59

In summary, they will be cursed with all the diseases of Egypt, also every sickness and every plague. The LORD will delight over you to make you perish and destroy you. They will be torn from the land. The LORD will scatter them among all peoples. They shall serve other gods, wood and stone. They shall find no rest. The LORD will give them a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul. Their life shall hang in doubt. They will dread night and day and have no assurance of your life. They will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there will be no buyer.”

Deut 28:16- 68

This sounds like the world today, because it is

Some think that the curses given way back then don't apply today, but this is not true, the truth is the judgment of God as experienced by painful curses not only continue but will intensify as we draw closer to the coming of the Lord to judge the world. The relevant passage for today is found in the book of Revelation which speaks of the time from

the birth of Christ to His return as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. This time is what we call the Church age, our time. This is the time the Lord will pour out seven bowls of wrath which are a set of plagues. They are recorded as apocalyptic events that were seen in the vision of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Seven angels are given seven bowls of God's wrath, each consisting of judgements full of the wrath of God. These seven bowls of God's wrath are poured out on the wicked and the followers of the Antichrist after the sounding of the seven trumpets.

The curse continues in the world today because the world has not repented. *Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God." So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image. The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like that of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died. Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying, "Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it." And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments," The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory. Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds. The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east.'*

Rev 16:1-12

"they did not repent" If we don't experience life as the curse of judgment on all who don't satisfy the requirements of the law of God, we won't repent and we won't value the sacrifice of Christ as we

should, and we definitely won't take up our cross to follow Him. We need to experience the conviction of sin like Isaiah who cursed himself when he saw God and knew his condition in sin. *“Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.”*

Isaiah 6:5

It is the one who has no struggles with sin that has not yet come under the conviction of God. Everyone from Adam down is in the same boat for we are all like him. When Adam disobeyed God's instructions his divine likeness was corrupted and he fell short of the glory of God that God had given him, so his relationship with the God of all holiness was broken because his obedience was not given to God; and all those who came after Adam are born with his corrupted image and carry Adam's DNA of disobedience and declared self independence.

‘For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, and sin reigned through death.’

Rom 5:19, 21

‘For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.’

Rom 3:23

‘Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.’

Rom 5:12

‘For the wages of sin is death.’

Rom 6:23

‘sin reigned in death.’

Rom 5:21

‘And you were dead in your trespasses and sins.’

Eph 2:1

In our sin we died to our glory and majesty and we died spiritually in relationship with God. And we will die physically because death is the consequence of disobedience. After Adam's deadly falling from grace, God gave us the Ten Commandments to teach us about His minimum requirements for a relationship with Him. These Commandments show us through our daily experience that by ourselves we cannot measure up to that standard of being holy before God.

We cannot keep His word because as Adam's descendants we prefer our independence and decide for ourselves how we live. So God's commandments convict us of our ingrained disobedience that causes us to continue to fall short of His glory. We violate God's righteousness in an act of pure treason against His lawful sovereignty. We are guilty as

charged and deserve the death treason deserves. *'For the wrath the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.*
Rom 1:18

'God is a righteous judge, And a God who has indignation every day.'
Psalm 7:11

Adam's disobedience resulted in his spiritual death as the Spirit of God left him so he was just flesh. *Then the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh."*
Gen 6:3

However his likeness in the image of God wasn't totally lost, but he had lost the divine power to live as God's son. As Adam was we are. *'Thus He remembered that they were but flesh, A wind that passes and does not return.'*
Psalm 78:39

Flesh is the term given to natural man who no longer lives by the Spirit of God. Flesh describes the self that is now unable to please God. *"For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God."*
Rom 8:5, 7-8

'Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.'
1 Cor 15:50

Natural man has only a faint idea of the seriousness of sin that is actually treason against God's righteous requirements for all mankind. And this treason is punishable by the death sentence. *'And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving ^[cl]so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.'*
2 Cor 4:3-4

Unless there is some sort of miracle which is beyond the ability of man, he cannot be restored to his former glory and majesty, therefore he will be lost to sin and death forever.

If we take the calamities of the world, conflict, disease, floods, pests, wars, etc, to be no more than naturally occurring events, we can hide from the fact they are indeed God's wrath in judgement against our failure to honour Him who is calling us to repent, which means we live

for Him and not ourselves. This is the work of God's anger for our good. If God had no standards He was prepared to uphold with divine justice, then He couldn't be known as the God of love who was prepared to protect the values of those who were righteousness and obeyed Him. God cares about justice so in an act of love He provided the only acceptable sacrifice for sin, His only Son.

Salvation from the curse is with God

"He shall bruise you on the head" The Son of God provides the miracle we need by being willing to die to free us from the curse. Jesus died because He was the only one who could satisfy God's justice. He was the only suitable means of redemption because He was without sin and perfectly righteous before God. *'So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.'*

Rom 5:18

By offering His perfect life for our sins Jesus, the unique Son of God satisfied the Just requirements of God on our behalf. *'For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.'*

Rom 5:6, 8, 10

God's solution to our sinful guilt is the sacrifice of His Son as the seed of woman born of God. This is why Jesus Christ had to die, because the justice of God required a penalty be paid for sins. And that penalty had to be perfectly suited to the sins of many who deserve death, so the price paid had to be perfectly adequate. No man can pay the perfect price, not even for himself, but the God-Man who was given for our benefit was perfect and willing to die our death so we can live.

Jesus became a curse for us

As our curse bearer Jesus Christ was forsaken unto death instead of us. Jesus' blood as the Lamb of God accounted for our sins, (Lev 16:15-19) for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness for sins. (Heb 9:22) Jesus is also our scapegoat who took our impurities out into the wilderness.

Lev 16: 20-22

Together the goat sacrificed and the living scapegoat sent into the wilderness shows that the goats were substituted for the people, and that they bore the penalty of their sin. The scapegoat pictures Jesus who bore our sins, and by taking them away, frees us from the guilt of our sins. In taking our sins upon Himself and dying the death we deserve, Jesus satisfies God's wrath on our behalf so He could make amends for our sins. Jesus satisfied the wrath of the Father for our transgressions. In Jesus becoming a curse for us, our sins were assigned to the Him who became our sacrificial goat that was driven out of the camp into the wilderness, away from the place where God dwelt in the temple amongst His people. He was driven outside where the blessings never reached. He was driven out into the curse.

Jesus is the Lamb of God who removes our sin from us by becoming cursed for us. The God-Man abandoned in the wilderness is not blessed but became the curse of the world. Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree. (Gal 3:13) On the cross Jesus Christ took our place on that cursed tree. As Jesus took up the sins of the world He became an obscene curse abandoned in the wilderness without respect and despised by men. Jesus was killed outside the camp, outside Jerusalem so the fullness of the curse could be poured out on Him; so much so that even the sun stopped shining. *'Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"* Matt 27:45-46

God the Father had turned His face away from His one and only Son, His countenance was not towards the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. At the right time chosen by God, Jesus finished that work of redeeming sinners by paying up on our behalf. What He came from heaven to do on our behalf was completed when He bowed His head in death. *'Knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said,.. "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.'* John 19:28-30

Jesus gains access to God for us when the temples curtain is torn into two

With His perfect sacrifice all barriers between God and His chosen people were removed. This is the significance of the temple curtain being split in two, for the curtain excluded the people from the inner

sanctuary of the holy place. *‘Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split.’*

Matt 27:50-15

Even in death Jesus died in victory over the power of Satan because His life was not taken from Him, He gave His life up willingly for us who He has called out of the world, so that we can share in His blessing and triumph before the throne of God the Father. The seed of the woman was bruising the head of Satan.

Gen 3:15

Our victory as His disciples comes from His victory on the cross, because God seeks to restore us to His spiritual family and bless us with the highest good possible through the sacrifice of His Son. Therefore Jesus payed the penalty we cannot pay, so we can receive forgiveness in His name and be born again by the Spirit in the image of God in holiness and truth. He died in our place so we can be born again to live like Him and walk as He walked.

1 John 2:6

In John’s gospel we read: *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”*

John 3:16

This is the good news of the Gospel. *‘Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.’*

1 Cor 15:3-4

This God man Jesus was born of God and not from Adam’s seed so He represented a new beginning without the curse of Adam’s sinful DNA. Jesus lived just as all men, and was tempted as all, but without sin so that He could be the perfect example of how to live in the presence of God, and offer Himself as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. It was by His innocent death that He was raised up again by God and as our mediator in heaven, so He could send the Holy Spirit so that those who believed in Him having turned away from life in the flesh of self indulgence, could be restored by being born again by God and have access once again to the tree of Life. Christ sets us free from the curse, so that we can be obedient in our relationship with God our Father.

Naturally we are all born of the seed of Adam and carry the curse because we also fall short of the glory of God. The curse of God on Satan, the world and man remains to this day. The only solution for

anyone is the willingness to die to self with Christ in order born again by the Spirit to be raised up together with Christ in the new image of God. *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”*

John 3:3, 5

The seed of Adam must die, the only way to live eternally is to believe in Christ and let the seed of Adam die through humble repentance so there can be a new birth in the image of God. *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”*

John 12:24

If there is no self denial and taking up of our cross we will surely perish. *“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.”*

Luke 9:23-24

The answer to the curse of sin is regeneration through the blood of Jesus Christ and a new beginning of holiness in the Spirit of God. However God's wrath, His righteous anger, remains upon those who do not obey Him. *“He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”* (John 3:18) "he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

John 3:36

The question is what must we do to be saved from the curse?

“What must I do to be saved?” “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.”

Acts 16:30-31

But what does it mean to "believe in the Lord Jesus"? Doesn't it mean I believe He died for my sins, or is there more I need to know? There is much, much more.

The first thing we need to understand is who the Lord Jesus is if we are to believe in Him. John tells us at the start of his gospel: *‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into*

being through Him, and 'Apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.'

John 1:1-3

Jesus is God to be obeyed and worshipped. Those who believe in Him receive His message in order to gain the benefit of His life. *'But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.'*

John 1:12-13

Believing repentance results in faith as a gift from God instilled into a receptive heart. *'For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith."' (Rom 1:17) 'For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;'*

Eph 2:8

Unless there is repentance by turning away from being self absorbed and doing what the independent heart thinks is good enough, there will be no gift of faith and no justification resulting in salvation from the curse. Faith is not gained by working on being good; faith comes by knowing we can never be good enough, so we believe in Christ by trusting in Him who will be our righteousness after repentance.

It's not possible to receive Jesus without knowing God alone gives us the right to become children of God. No one can claim the right to call on the Lord because they are born into a religious family. No one can gain access to God through their own efforts. And no one can become God's child because they willed for themselves *'the right to become children of God.'* New birth by the Spirit is in God's hands alone because He willed it to happen His way.

Therefore believing has to include acknowledging Jesus is the God who created all things and is the giver of life, (John 1:4) so that if we are to live as God's children we take our place under His authority. *'For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities— all things have been created through Him and for Him.'* Col 1:16

As the creator of all things He alone has authority over all that exists. Therefore believing in Him means we submit to His divine authority and obey His commands as coming from God if we intend to call upon

His name. Paul writes: *“Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved,”*

Rom 10:13

Calling on the name of the Lord is to appeal to His majestic character and authority in an act of worship that surrenders to His will and the demands of His holiness. The idea of *“calling on the name of the Lord,”* in this context means turning to Christ in faith in seeking His salvation. This is the act of placing our hope in Christ for our complete existence. The Bible tells us that faith is a gift from God just as repentance is a gift. So no one can call on God until God has called them.

And *“Whosoever”* doesn't include everyone, it only includes those He has called. *‘For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.’*

Rom 8:29-30

To use calling on the name of the Lord as some sort of magic salvation formula in order to get saved without repentance and obedience is to take the Lord's name in vain. It is a travesty to pretend to serve in His name while pleasing self. Calling on the name of the Lord cannot be separated from believing in Him, or from the need of humble repentance and willingly offering self as a sacrifice to God. Rom 12:1

This calling of God is very different from those Jesus described in Matthew 7:21–23, they called on His name, but had no actual faith in Him to obey Him. *“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 on 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 then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’”*

Matt 7:21-23

‘This people honours Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me. “But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.” “Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted.”’

Matt 15:8-9, 13

Calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ has the same result in the heart as faith and repentance. Therefore calling on the name of the Lord

is the same as believing in Him as the Lord God. Calling on the name of the Lord is shown in our heart and actions through repentance. *“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”* (Rom 10:9)
“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out.”
Acts 3:19

Repentant faith results in death to sin and life in Christ

‘Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God.’
2 Cor 5:17-18

‘He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.’
2 Pet 1:4

‘Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty!’
Psalm 8:5

Man made in the image of God was to be holy as God was Holy. The only way for man to live in God's presence was to be holy and blameless in His sight. The only way to do that was to do all God had commanded. *‘Pursue.....the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.’*
Heb 12:14

This sanctification. Those who have been redeemed from the curse by the blood of Christ must eagerly pursue, and go after with persistent and urgent efforts the process of transformation in claiming the holiness of Christ in us needed to be filled up with the fullness of God.

If we have not identified with Christ and His death on our behalf knowing our state of sinful depravity; and denied ourselves and taken up our cross as He has commanded, (Luke 9:23-24) we have no part in Him who died for the repentant who obey Him. No one who considers they are religious or of good character who do not do as He says can gain the benefit of the curse placed on Him, so they continue with the curse because they trust in their own efforts and not on Christ alone. Following Jesus Christ cost us our life according to self in this world.

Jesus insisted that following Him into the kingdom would cost us everything, which some were not willing to pay, so they sneak in by the back door. *“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who*

sowed good seed in his field. But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn."

Matt 13:24-26, 30

The tares are what we call weeds, and weeds are unable to produce a righteous crop worth harvesting. The weeds are religious people of the flesh who will not inherit the kingdom of God but will be uprooted and thrown into the fire.

Whoever calls on the name of the Lord submits to Him as the one who has absolute dominion and authority over everyone. As Lord He alone determines our path in life and we accept His authority to tell us how to live. As Lord He alone can give us the life we need to live in the presence of God. *'In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.'*

John 1:4

"For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes."

John 5:21

And believing in Jesus is the same as entering through the narrow gate. Believing in Him as the only way to life means we stop believing in any other way and shed ourselves of our sinful determination for independence, otherwise we will not be able to pass through His narrow door to be separated from the world by following His example of obedience to God. Jesus said: *"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it."* Matt 7:13-14

The Lord's way of salvation is not the life of comfort and ease that many desire as people of the flesh. His way of living and thinking is according to the way of the sacrificial cross. A life lived according to the Spirit in suffering with Christ has to replace our desire to find another easier way. Those who do not receive Christ on His terms are already judged.

"He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the

only begotten Son of God. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. 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 3:18, 35-36

God's wrath seeks repentant lovers. This is the ultimate good news: *“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”* (1 Tim 1:15) Because of Christ, God can rightly call repentant sinners justified. (Rom 3:26) God has done what we could not do, and he has done what we didn't deserve. In Christ Jesus we have something Adam didn't have, the holiness of Jesus Christ.

To be a Christian is to have Christ in us

All Blessings are all “in Christ” in us. The apostle Paul asks the Corinthian believers a question: *“Or do you not realise about yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you?”*

2 Cor 13:5

In saying, *“Jesus Christ is in you,”* means that Jesus Christ is literally, practically dwelling within the believers. Many other verses in the Word of God confirm the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ actually dwells in His believers. Some want to limit “in Christ” to mean some spiritual association but not one spirit, but “in Christ” means He has located Himself within the heart of those who love Him. We need to realise this fact about ourselves. Christ is not outside of us, a Helper in our time of need, but He dwells in us, living in and with us all the time. *‘If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.’*

Rom 8:10

When we received Jesus as our Saviour by faith and repentance, He cleansed us of our sins and He came into our spiritual heart as life from God. And because Christ is in us, our *“spirit is life because of righteousness.”* *‘For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves.’*

2 Cor 4:6-7

“this treasure.” is Jesus Christ, in whose face we see the glory of God. Christ lives in us as earthen vessels as a precious treasure, revealing to

us the glory of God from within. *“it pleased God to reveal His Son in me.”*

Gal 1:15-16

“to reveal His Son in me.” God’s plan is to reveal His Son in us, from within, rather than just to us from without. Or, to put it another way, God reveals Christ to us from within our hearts so we can witness to Him in word and deed. And He reveals Himself to the world through us. *‘I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.’*

Gal 2:20

“Christ lives in me,” clearly telling us that Christ lives in His obedient believers. The Christian life is not a matter of behaving like Christ, but of allowing Christ Himself to live in and through us. *“until Christ is formed in you.”*

Gal 4:19

Jesus Christ wants us to experience the reality of His presence actually dwelling in us so we are filled up to the fullness of God as we look for His kingdom to come. *“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”*

Col 1:27

When we believed in Christ He comes to live in our spirit by His Spirit making His home in our hearts. In the future, when He returns to take us to glory, He will change our body outwardly so that God’s glory can shine through us like the sun through a magnifying glass. This glorified Christ who lives in us is also our hope of such glory. *‘When He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marvelled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed.’*

2 Thess 1:10

This Christ who now lives in us means one day our bodies will be transformed to match His resurrected body. What a glory to God that people on this earth would be chosen by Christ and be compelled by His Spirit to receive Him who is now their life. *‘Christ is our life’*

Col 3:3

“I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

John 17:26

What a divine miracle of blessing that Jesus is able to grow in us to express Himself through our lives as His representatives on earth. *‘That*

they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.' 2 Cor 5:15

Day by day we need to give Him the opportunity to transform us through faithful obedience so He is life is formed in us. As we do, Christ will be able to express Himself more fully through us in our daily life. *'So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.'* *'That you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.'* Eph 3:17, 19

In Christ we are set free from the curse

'Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Gal 3:13-14

For Christ has redeemed the faithful from the curse of the law by becoming a curse in our place. When He was crucified He suffered the curse of God for all His disciples. Jesus did this so that the blessings of God might be ours so we can receive the promised Spirit through faith and fulfil the law of God. *'For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.'* Rom 8:3-4

Everyone who relies on trying to be good enough in their own strength is cursed because it is not of faith in Christ. The blessing of Christ is His Spirit who lives in the obedient children. *'The Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.'* Acts 5:32

'For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.' Gal 5:13, 17

'As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behaviour; because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY." 1 Pet 1:14-16

Blessings don't mean earthly bliss

In becoming a curse for us Jesus saves us from the judgement of God. But that does not mean we won't suffer in the world that remains under the curse of the wrath of God. This is the reason we need faith, we still live in the fallen world under the curse, but we live by faith and not by sight, knowing that God is working all things we experience in the world for our good according to His purpose that we are transformed into the image of Christ while we live with Him down here.

'However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.'

Rom 8:9-10

Those who have the Spirit through faithful obedience follow the example of Jesus Christ. *"For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."*

John 13:15, 17

Those who have been set free from the curse don't join themselves to those who live under the curse; to walk with the ungodly. *'How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish.'*

Psalms 1:1, 4-6

The life joined to Christ by faith only comes through accepting His humility as our own. *'Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but ^[e]emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.'*

Phil 2:5-7

Jesus Christ came to fulfil the blessing of the saints with His kingdom's glory, not to chase after the vain pursuits of the world and the things of the world. Instead He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses.

He made known to us the mystery of His will.

In Him also we have obtained an inheritance.

You were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance.

To the redemption of God's own possession. May give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.'

From Eph 1:3-19

When Jesus comes again the final curse will be overcome

'Then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death.'

1 Cor 15:24-26

'For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory.'

1 Cor 15:53-54

To have Christ is to also have access to the tree of life

When Adam disobeyed God he forfeited the opportunity to eat from the tree of life and instead was sent out to live out the judgment of God's curse. But Christians are blessed to have the tree of Life open to them, something Adam was unable to have because he disobeyed God.

'Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of ^[b]the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads.'

Rev 22:1-4

God's blessings are face to face

The Blessings of God are most powerful when we know His face is turned towards us because He cherishes us in Christ. *'The Lord bless you, and keep you; The Lord make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace.'*

Num 6:24-26

To not have the face of God shining on us is to be under the curse because we curse ourselves as a people of unclean lips. When we misstep and fail to live up to our new birth in righteousness we will experience a lack of face to face fellowship with God as our spirit will be grieved within us. But if we are in Christ to live for Him we can confess and be forgiven of all our failings.

1 John 1:9

Thanks to God because Jesus died we are blessed to be one life in Christ who prayed for our eternal unity. *"that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me."*

John 17:21-23

The responsibility of the blessed

As a Christian we have Christ in us so we can represent Him to His own beloved disciples and even to the world lost in darkness. For this purpose He said: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you."*

Matt 28:19-20

But the god of this world would have us chase after the perishable, but the God of heaven calls us to live for the imperishable blessings in

Christ. *‘Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.’* 1 John 2:15

Man's original blessing was to be made like God with glory and majesty according to His holiness. Man's life was to be a blessing of dominion on earth as God's representative. When we die with Christ we identify with His atoning death to remove the curse so we can be made holy and blameless before Him. The new life in Christ is the life of God's holiness in Christ. Those who are in Christ are to live in obedience and truth just as Jesus lived. *‘the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.’*

1 John 2:6

When we die with Christ we live as His representatives in the likeness of His life. *‘Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.’* Rom 6:4

The Blessings of God are inside the Holy City

The dwelling place of God is now in the church as the body of Christ, which made up of all those who are called out of the world to live in Christ. At this time the blessings of God are not found in the world as in the days of the Jews; the blessings of God are restored to the people of God in whom Christ lives in His body the Church. Those who are looking for the blessings in the world don't understand that the world is outside the camp of God's people. And the blessings of God are for those in whom He lives as His Church. Inside the City is God's dwelling place. As the dwelling of God the church represents a shadow of the New Jerusalem, the City of God, where God will live eternally among His people who are born of His Spirit.

Outside in the world, is the city of man, following the prince of the world, for they are Satan's seed born as Adam's descendents. The occupants of Satan's city are hostile to the seed of the woman and follow the desires of their father the devil. *“You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”* *“He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God.”*

John 8: 44, 47

Praise is to God that Satan's victory over Adam didn't last forever. At the right time the seed of the woman came to disable his scheming to rule the world. With the death and resurrection of Christ the seed of the woman has indeed crushed the head of the Serpent. Gen 3:15

With the coming of the Christ there is hostility between Satan's seed and the seed of the woman who is Christ the Lord of all creation. The city of God remains under siege until the King returns to destroy the enemy forever.

“Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s enemies will be the members of his household.” Matt 10:34-36

“If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.” John 15:18-19

Because the influence of Satan and God’s curse, tribulation in the world remains until the Lord comes again to take His people home to the New Jerusalem, life in the church is a life of faith which is a gift from God in the face of suffering. *‘if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.’* Rom 8:17

Faith means we trust God and rely on His providential guidance and protection while we live in the world under His curse; for our Lord has prayed that the Father will protect us from the evil one while we remain in the world that is antagonistic towards His chosen people. *“I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.”* John 17:15-18

If the believer is to be untouched by the curse that remains on the world as a display of God's wrath, then living by faith wouldn't be necessary. But we know that we live in a fallen world full of sin and face opposition so in faith we are not moved. *‘Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine,*

or nakedness, or peril, or sword? But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.’ Rom 8:35, 37-39

Our fellowship is with the Father and the Son amongst the chosen people of God in the Church. (1 John 1:3) Because the Lord Jesus lives in His people, when we go to church we should see the Lord revealed to us by the love of Christ shared with all those who are in Him, because He is in them, and we will know we have a place in the family of God, and those who are outside the City walls may desire to be part of that family. *“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”* John 13:35

Because the Lord unites all His people in one life in the Spirit, there will be no need for anyone to behave like strangers taking a ride on a bus. If we find strangers where we should find family, wouldn't it be correct for us to conclude that Christ is not at home because there is no evidence of His life?

The laws of the bus travellers are *“don't speak to me, and definitely don't touch me, leave me alone so I can keep to myself. If you must talk don't get personal, and definitely don't start talking to me about how you are walking with Jesus Christ. And if you have any respect for my privacy, definitely don't ask me how I am walking with the Lord Jesus.”* Bus travellers don't know or care about the cherishing love for one another that the Spirit gives to those who love the Lord.

Church is not a bus or a building, church is the community of those called out of the world and made alive with Christ as His body. Church belongs to those who have a common union with Christ, so church can happen even on a bus; and it should definitely happen in the building designated by the cross of Christ's sacrifice.

If Christ is living in those He has chosen, then their lives will be consumed with evidence of His life being expressed in the pursuit of all those things that motivated Him. His will and desire will be theirs just as dear pants for streams of water. They will be filled with His passion to see His people become mature examples of His life, and they will

undertake training in righteousness with all diligence. Christ's disciples will have His hearts deepest yearning to save the lost and this will not be quenched by worldly desires.

All this is true because the church is Christ's holy community committed to working out His life His way by the enabling of the Spirit. (1 Cor 12:11) And this transforming work is no private affair in order to fulfil His plan of redemption in the world. *'We were all made to drink of one Spirit.'*
1 Cor 12:13

To be in Christ is to be His life in His community. To be outside His community is to remain in the world, outside the camp and still living under the curse. There is no place in His plan for those who call on His name to decide to not take their place in the church, for that is the same as rejecting Him, for the church is His body on earth. To enjoy the benefits of His sacrifice requires obedience to His commands and active participation in His community of blessed fellowship.

Jesus restores the blessings of God to those who take their place in His body and live for Him in His church and not for themselves. When God chose His people Israel He made a good deal with them to bless them that had one specific requirement, obedience, just as Adam's blessings were conditional on obedience. The church needs to be mindful that experiencing the blessings of intimacy with God is still conditional on obedience just as in the beginning.

The Church's obedience will mean the commands Jesus gave will be taught to all His disciples, since they are the very things they need so that they can grow up into mature examples of how He lives His life through them. If we neglect His instructions we neglect Him. If there is a claim by someone to have Christ, there should also be ample proof of the fact in concrete evidence of His life being lived for Him by the one making the claim.

'But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.'

1 Pet 2:9-10

‘For in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children.’ Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.’

Acts 17:28, 30-31

To claim to be in Christ and exclude ourselves from the church is to indicate that Christ does not live in us, for if He did, He would be seeking fellowship in His community. The curse of God is on all who do not live for Christ. The god of this world would have us run after the perishable things of the world, but the God of heaven calls us to live for the imperishable blessings in Christ.

From the time of the first giving of the Covenant and the instruction on blessings and curses, the first purpose of God's wrath and anger is to bring the rebellious to repentance.

The second purpose God uses for the curses is to train the repented in the way of righteousness while they work out their transformation into the image of Christ. They do this by being confronted with the most disagreeable things and people so that they learn not to react as from the flesh but to walk by the Spirit so that they can be transformed into the image of Christ.

When Paul prays *that Christ may dwell in your heart through faith*, (Eph 3:17) he means Christ owns your heart, in this there's not to be any suggestions of dual occupation. Everyone who loves Christ and obeys Him is disciplined by the Father for their greatest good. The one who will not humble themselves before God is not happy about their situation. The other is thankful and rejoices to know they are cherished by God who disciplines His children for their benefit. It's time for those who love God in Christ who are saved from the curse to go into the darkness and labour to bring people into the light of the one who became the curse bearer for those who repent and obey Him.

‘Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.’

Jude 1:24-25

Living Water Resources Come to the River

God's love has blessings and curses

'For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.' 2 Cor 8:9

We are rich in Christ because we have Christ in us as the greatest blessing of God.

The perfect love of God is with us, so we should never be without comfort, for the steadfast love of God never ceases. Nothing can separate us from the love of God because we have fellowship with the Holy Spirit, He is God with us to seal us in Christ and lead us together with all the saints into all righteousness so that we become mature in Christ.

'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.' 2 Cor 13:14

Contents compiled by

Robert C May

Copyright © 2020

cometotheriver@optusnet.com.au

www.cometothestream.com