EXPLAINING

36

Blessings & Curses



Derek Prince

Explaining Blessings and Curses

Derek Prince

Sovereign World

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About the Author

Derek Prince was born in India, of British parents. He was educated as a scholar of Greek and Latin at two of Britain's most famous educational institutions—Eton College and Cambridge University. From 1940 to 1949, he held a Fellowship (equivalent to a resident professorship) in Ancient and Modern Philosophy at King's College, Cambridge. He also studied Hebrew and Aramaic, both at Cambridge University and at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In addition, he speaks a number of other modern languages.

In the early years of World War II, while serving as a hospital attendant with the British Army, Derek Prince experienced a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ, concerning which, he writes:

'Out of this encounter, I formed two conclusions which I have never since had reason to change: first, that Jesus Christ is alive; second, that the Bible is a true, relevant, up-to-date book. These two conclusions radically and permanently altered the whole course of my life.'

At the end of World War II, he remained where the British Army had placed him—in Jerusalem. Through his marriage to his first wife, Lydia, he became father to the eight adopted girls in Lydia's children's home there. Together, the family saw the rebirth of the State of Israel in 1948. While serving as educators in Kenya, Derek and Lydia adopted their ninth child, an African baby girl. Lydia died in 1975, and Derek Prince married his present wife, Ruth, in 1978.

In the intervening years, Derek Prince has served as pastor, educator, lecturer, and counsellor on several continents, and is internationally recognised as one of the leading Bible expositors of our time. He has authored over 30 books, many of which have been translated into other languages. In great demand as a

conference speaker, Derek Prince travels frequently to many other parts of the world, and also maintains a home in Israel.

Non-denominational and non-sectarian in his approach, Derek Prince has prophetic insight into the significance of current events in the light of Bible prophecy.

How to Pass from Curse to Blessing

I believe that this booklet can be of tremendous help to many people. The message can change lives, communities, churches and even nations. I have discovered that there are many people who are fighting something that they don't fully understand in their own lives—some kind of frustration, something that every time they are about to succeed intervenes and keeps them from success. Something that holds them back from being a complete person, from being completely free, from being able to serve the Lord the way they would wish to, and from leading a life of real victory. I believe, in many cases, the problem they are fighting, which they have never diagnosed or come fully to grips with, is that there is a curse over their life.

I would like to tell you, first of all, a little of how I myself was led into this truth. Some years ago in a Presbyterian church in America I was conducting a deliverance service. I had come to the end of my message, and had not yet begun to minister. I was standing behind the pulpit, and in the front row, on my left, I noticed a family—father, mother and teenage daughter. As I glanced at them, it seemed to me the Holy Spirit said to me, "There's a curse over that family." I had no other reason for that thought except that it seemed to me that the Lord said it to me. So I stepped from behind the pulpit, went up to the father and said to him, "Sir, I believe God has shown me that there is a curse over your family. Would you like me to revoke that curse and release you from it, in the name of Jesus?" Immediately he said, "Yes."

I had no idea at the time why he so immediately accepted that statement. I stepped back behind the pulpit and said a short simple prayer. Although I was not in contact with any of them, there was a visible, physical reaction in each of them when I broke the curse in the name of Jesus. Then I noticed that the girl, the teenage daughter, had her left leg in a cast from above the

thigh to the bottom of the foot. So I went back to the father and I said, "Would you like me to pray for the healing of your daughter?" And he said, "Yes. But you need to know that she has broken the same leg three times in eighteen months and the doctors say it will not heal."

Today if I heard that one statement, that a person had broken the same leg three times in eighteen months, I wouldn't need any further indication that there was a curse over that family. At that time, however, because the leg was in a cast, all I could do was hold the cast in my hand and pray. So I prayed a simple prayer for healing. Shortly afterwards, I got a letter from the mother thanking me for what had happened, and saying that when they went back the next time to the clinic to have the leg X-rayed, the X-ray showed that it had healed, and the daughter was soon out of the cast.

As I meditated on that experience this thought came to me. God showed me there was a curse over the family and led me to break the curse before He permitted me to pray for the healing of the daughter. Why? My conclusion was that she could not have been healed until the curse was revoked. In other words, the curse was an invisible barrier that kept her from the blessing that God wanted her to receive. Then God began to deal with me about this whole matter of blessings and curses. As I turned to the Scriptures, I was amazed by how much the Bible has to say about it, and how little had been preached about it in most of the places and congregations that I am familiar with.

When I was in South Africa a few years later, I met a Jewish lady who is a believer in Jesus, saved and baptised in the Holy Spirit, and she told Ruth and me this testimony personally.

She was a very highly qualified executive secretary, and, under the influence of some Christian teaching that she had heard, she prayed to get the best paid job in her profession in Cape Town. And she got it! She found herself working for a man who was a president of his own particular business, and she soon discovered that this man, and all the executives in the company, were in some strange kind of cult that was led by a woman

prophetess.

After a little while, her boss said to her, "Our lady guru has pronounced blessings over us and we would like you to type them out for us." When she started to type them, she discovered that they were anything but blessings, and as a committed Christian she didn't feel free to type them. So she went to her boss and explained the situation. The boss was very gracious and apologised for not realising it would go against her conscience. I have no way of knowing exactly what happened next, but my guess is that the lady guru heard about this incident and prayed some kind of a prayer for the executive secretary. Such a prayer would, of course, be a channel of occult power.

Anyhow, almost immediately after, the secretary began to develop acute arthritis in both hands. Her fingers curled up and became absolutely rigid and stiff. She couldn't bend them, she couldn't do anything in her profession, and the pain was agonising. She couldn't sleep at night. She couldn't even sleep in the same bed with her husband because every time he moved, the movement of the bed caused intense pain in her fingers. She went to a professional in this realm—a doctor—and he diagnosed it as rheumatoid arthritis.

Another Christian lady friend of hers had heard my three messages, 'Curses, Cause and Cure', and brought the cassettes to her executive secretary friend to listen to. They listened to the three cassettes, to the end of the third where I lead people in a prayer of release from the curse over their lives. At that point the cassette jammed. It wouldn't go forward, it wouldn't go back and it wouldn't eject! There is no natural explanation for that!

However, the lady who had brought the cassette had typed out the prayer of release previously, and had the typed version with her. This Jewish lady was pretty sophisticated and she really didn't believe very much in curses. She had listened to the cassettes just to please her friend and at first she didn't want to read this prayer of release. But eventually she agreed with her friend to read the prayer, and as she read it out loud (it doesn't last for more than three or four minutes) her fingers uncurled

and became completely free, the pain ceased and by the time she had finished reading the prayer of release, she was perfectly healed. She then went back to the same doctor and had him check her hands again. His diagnosis was that medically she was totally healed.

That came only by one thing. There was no prayer for healing.

Nothing but this prayer of release from a curse.

★★★★★

Now let's look at the Bible and see what it has to say about blessings and curses.

You may be surprised at how much the Bible has to say about them. Altogether words for blessings and curses occur almost 600 times.

Both blessings and curses are usually expressed in words—either spoken words or written words. But those words are not ordinary words, they are words charged with supernatural power. The power may be the power of God or it may be the power of Satan.

One of the features of both curses and blessings is that they often continue from generation to generation to generation. This means that a person who is experiencing either a blessing or a curse may not easily discern where it comes from, because it may be in the past, even hundreds of years ago.

I was teaching on this in Adelaide, Australia, and a lady wrote me a letter afterwards. Her ancestors were from Scotland, from a clan called Nyxxon. She had historical evidence (of which she gave me a photocopy) that because of clan wars between the Scots and the English in the 16th century, a Bishop of the Church of Scotland had put a curse on that clan. She realised that four centuries later things were happening in her family which were due to that curse. This statement may surprise you, but I can support it with biblical evidence.

So curses and blessings are words that are charged with supernatural power—maybe the power of God, maybe the power of the devil. They are words which impinge upon people's lives, and to a large extent determine their destiny. Often they will go on from generation to generation, even for thousands of years.

Nevertheless, I want to encourage you. There may be a curse over your life, but God has provided a solution. Before I go on to explain the solution, however, I will give two biblical examples of blessings.

Blessings

The first is in Genesis 22 where Abraham had been willing to offer up his son Isaac in response to the Lord's requirement, and then at the last moment the Lord provided a ram to be offered instead of Isaac.

> *"Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: 'By myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.'"* *(Genesis 22: 15-17)*

Notice that the blessing was to continue on to Isaac's descendants, from generation to generation.

Then God continues in verse 18:

> *"In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."*

It is very important to notice the reason for the blessing—because Abraham obeyed God's voice. That is the basic reason for the blessing of God in any life.

If you look on a little further in Genesis chapter 27 you find how Isaac blessed his son Jacob. But the strange thing is, Isaac thought he was blessing Esau who was the firstborn. But while

Esau was off hunting the venison which Isaac had asked for, Rebekah (Isaac's wife) substituted Jacob, her favourite son. In order to get away with the deception, because Isaac was blind, she dressed Jacob up in Esau's clothes and cooked a kid instead of the venison. Then she served it up the way her husband liked it, and took the skin off the kid and wrapped it around Jacob's neck and arms, so that he would seem hairy like Esau (because Jacob was a very smooth man and Esau was a very hairy man).

So along comes Jacob pretending to be Esau, and Isaac checks and says, "Are you my son Esau?" and Jacob says, "Yes, I am"—but it was a lie! Then Isaac asked for the food that had been prepared, saying,

> *'"Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's game, so that my soul may bless you.'" (Genesis 27:24, 25a)*

We have to acknowledge that Isaac was somewhat carnal. He wanted his stomach filled with his favourite food before he could pronounce his blessing!

> *"So he brought it near to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank. Then his father Isaac said to him, 'Come near now and kiss me, my son.' And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said: 'Surely, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed. Therefore may God give you of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, and let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be those who bless you!'" (Genesis 27: 25b-29)*

Isaac's blessing was tremendous in its scope, and it was to continue on from generation to generation.

Now a little while later, in comes Esau with the venison and tries to offer it to his father. Isaac then realises he has been deceived, and that he blessed Jacob when he thought he was blessing Esau. But note Isaac's reaction:

> *"Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, 'Who? Where is the one who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate all of it before you came, and I have blessed him—and indeed he shall be blessed.'"* *(Genesis 27:33)*

Isn't that amazing? Isaac thought he was blessing Esau but he knew the words that he had pronounced did not come from himself. The blessing he had pronounced was a prophetic blessing—supernaturally given him from God. For this reason he could not "unsay" it.

A blessing like this is supernatural. It is not mere wishful thinking or the expression of human sentiment. It is something supernaturally empowered that determines the destiny of the one who receives it and of succeeding generations. That is true of blessings and curses alike.

Curses

First of all we'll turn to Proverbs 26:2.

> *"Like a flitting sparrow, like a flying swallow, so a curse without cause shall not alight."*

That's very important. If there is a curse, there is a cause for it. And in many cases in order to be released from the curse it is important to discover the cause. The curse never comes without a cause.

So let us look at some sources of curses.

1. God Himself

Many times God has pronounced a curse on nations or on individuals. It is one of God's severest forms of judgment.

i. Genesis 12:1-3

Let's look at the calling of Abraham in Genesis 12. This is where God called Abraham (when he was still called Abram) to go out from his city, Ur of the Chaldees, to an unknown destiny. There are actually seven stages to this call.

> *"Now the LORD had said to Abram: 'Get out of your*

country, from your kindred and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you.

Then there follows the seven successive stages of God's call:

1)*"I will make you a great nation;*

2)*I will bless you*

3)*And make your name great;*

4)*And you shall be a blessing.*

5)*I will bless those who bless you,*

6)*And I will curse him who curses you;*

7)*And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." (Genesis 12:1-3)*

This call unfolds God's sevenfold destiny for Abram.

But notice the sixth phase of God's call is a curse on everyone who curses Abram. There is a very important reason for this. When God calls a man to a special task, that man automatically becomes also a target for Satan's special enmity. Therefore God built into Abraham's call a special protective clause: *"I will curse him who curses you."*

Later on in the Bible this protection is specifically extended through Isaac to Jacob (Genesis 27:29) and then to the whole nation of Israel (Numbers 24:9)—that is, to the entire Jewish people.

We see, then, that God has pronounced a curse on all who curse the Jewish people. In contemporary speech, this attitude to the Jews is called "anti-Semitism". This is one major cause of a curse.

Today the effects of this curse are seen far and wide, both in the lives of individuals and of whole nations. Each of us needs to examine ourselves. Have I or any of my ancestors been enemies of the Jewish people? Have we spoken against them or cursed them? If so, there is almost certainly a curse over us.

ii. Deuteronomy 27:11 -26

In Deuteronomy 27 God ordained that when Israel came into their promised land, they were to pronounce upon themselves twelve curses if they disobeyed God in certain respects.

> *"And Moses commanded the people on the same day, saying, 'These shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people, when you have crossed over the Jordan: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin; and these shall stand on Mount Ebal to curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.'" (Deuteronomy 27:11-13)*

They could not enter into the promised land without being exposed either to a blessing, if they were obedient, or to a curse, if they were disobedient. There was no way into the promised land but through blessings and curses.

And then twelve curses are listed, as follows:

(a) Idolatory and False Gods

> *"And the Levites shall speak with a loud voice and say to all the men of Israel: 'Cursed is the one who makes any carved or moulded image, an abomination to the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and sets it up in secret.' And all the people shall answer and say, 'Amen!'" (Deuteronomy 27:14, 15)*

All Israel had to invoke upon themselves a curse if they became involved in idolatry, in worshipping false gods, or in what we call in modern English, the occult. That's the first and primary cause of curses in people's lives—involvement in idolatry, worship of false gods and the whole realm of the occult. In Exodus 20:3 (the first commandment) the Lord said,

> *"I am the Lord your God... you shall have no other gods besides me... you shall make no graven image to worship."*

And He adds,

> *"If you do, I will require it of the three following generations. It will not only be visited on you, but for three subsequent generations."*

So you understand that you may be struggling with something in your life right now which is due to your grandfather, or even your great grandfather, or great grandmother, or some other ancestor. You see how important it is to diagnose and identify the problem.

I will just summarise the other main causes of curses listed in Deuteronomy 27.

(b) Dishonouring parents

Dishonouring parents is a very, very important issue. I don't doubt that there will be some reading this booklet who have problems in their life because their attitude to their parents is not right. Remember the first commandment with a blessing is the opposite—

> *'Honour thy father and mother that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.'*

In all my experience in Christian ministry, I have never met a person who dishonoured their father and mother who had it well with them. In fact, I don't believe such a person exists. Dishonouring parents automatically exposes you to a curse. This does not mean you have to agree with your parents or even do everything they tell you to do—that depends on the way your parents are living. But you have to honour them as your parents. It is the first commandment with the promise of blessing. I cannot count how many people I have met whose lives have been straightened out when they straightened out their attitude to their parents.

I also think of others who never did it, and who never were blessed. I had a young friend who died of cancer at the age of forty. He was saved, baptised in the Holy Spirit and served the Lord, but he never enjoyed the blessing of God because he never

put right his relationship with his mother. She was a spiritist, so he had all the problems you can imagine, but he could have escaped from them if he had dealt with his relationship with his mother. I am not teaching theories—I am teaching about things that I know from experience.

(c) Illicit or unnatural sex

Any form of unnatural sex brings a curse. This includes any form of homosexuality or bestiality, as will sexual relationships with members of your family. Today we have to acknowledge the fact that there are millions of children who are victimised by their fathers or other relatives in the area of sex.

(d) Injustice to the weak and helpless

In other messages I deal with the fact that American Indians in the United States placed a curse on the White House because the American government regularly broke its treaties with American Indians. And believe me, Indians know how to curse! That's why from 1860 to 1980 every President elected in the 20th year died in office. You can trace that back to two things: the American government's unfaithfulness to the American Indians and the fact that Abraham Lincoln, who was the President elected in 1860, permitted a spiritist seance to be conducted in the White House by his wife, who later ended up in a mental institution. So you see that curses not only affect individuals, but whole nations.

I believe that the same would have happened to President Reagan, who was elected in 1980. It seemed that the curse was being fulfilled when an attempt was made on his life early in his presidency. But just before he took the oath as President, a group of us in a large meeting had combined in prayer and faith and released him from the curse—not just him, but the presidency. The bullet lodged within one inch of his heart, but his life was spared. I believe this was God's vindication of the prayer that released the curse. Once again, we see that this is no abstract theory. It is something that affects the lives of people and nations everywhere.

iii. Jeremiah 17:5, 6

Another completely different example of a curse is found here.

> *"Thus says the LORD: 'Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD.'"*

Then follows the curse:

> *"For he shall he like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land which is not inhabited."* *(Jeremiah 17:5, 6)*

That is typical of a person under a curse. Everybody else is receiving the rain (the blessing, the prosperity), but in the midst of it all, he lives in a parched land and never sees it. Why? Because of the curse. What's the cause of that curse?

> *Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength,* (relies on human ability and material resources) *and whose heart departs from the LORD.*

I believe that that curse rests over many Christian churches which have tasted of the grace of God, have known what it is to be blessed of His grace, but then have turned away and begun trusting in their own efforts, their own intelligence, their own methods and religious forms. They have made flesh their arm. The blessing of God has lifted and in its place a curse has come over those congregations.

I have found myself preaching in congregations that were under this kind of curse. But in spite of all my efforts I realised that very little could be accomplished until the curse was dealt with.

iv. Zechariah 5:1-4

In Zechariah 5, Zechariah had a vision of a scroll that contained curses on both sides. The curse on one side was on the person who stole; the curse on the other side was on the person who perjured and swore falsely in the name of the Lord.

Wherever this curse entered into the houses of people, it destroyed their entire houses.

A lot of houses are destroyed because a curse has come in. Many families are broken up because of a curse. Who can calculate how many people must be under a curse if we include all those who steal or perjure themselves? How many are not honest in their tax returns? Do you realise that could bring a curse on you? In the United States it would include a lot of people, and many of them would be church goers.

2. Men Representing God

Curses can also proceed from men representing God. We will consider just a few. The first is Joshua. In Joshua 6:26, after the children of Israel had miraculously captured the city of Jericho, Joshua pronounced a curse on anybody who would rebuild it.

> *"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 first-born, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates.'"*

That curse was pronounced about 1300 B.C. In about 800 B.C. a man rebuilt Jericho and we read about it in 1 Kings 16:34.

> *"In his days* [the days of King Ahab—approximately 500 years later] *Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation with Abiram his first-born, 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."*

Five hundred years later the curse pronounced by Joshua was worked out in that man who rebuilt the city. It cost him two of his children. Can you imagine the doctors of that day trying to determine the cause of their deaths? No obvious medical reason —they just pined away! No virus, no known medical diagnosis, and yet they died. But the doctors didn't know that the cause went back 500 years to a curse that had been pronounced by a man of God as a judgment on the city which God determined

should never be rebuilt. Can you see that you may be dealing with things in your life of which the cause can go back hundreds of years?

Another example is David's song after the death of Saul and Jonathan in 2 Samuel 1:21. At various times David pronounced some awe-inspiring curses. Many are recorded in the book of Psalms. Just to read them could make one's blood run cold. Yet that's part of the ministry of a man of God—men of God not only bless, they also curse.

This is what David said in his beautiful song about Saul and Jonathan:

> *"O mountains of Gilboa; Let there be no dew, nor let there be rain upon you, Nor fields of offerings. For the shield of the mighty is cast away there! The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil."*

Does it make sense to talk to mountains or does that seem strange to you? Those words of David were spoken about 1,000 years before Christ. Yet now—nearly 3,000 years later—you can go to the mountains of Gilboa and there is still no green vegetation on them today. Trees and vegetation will grow on the other mountains all around. The government of Israel works tirelessly to reforest the country and tried to plant trees on that mountain but they wouldn't grow! What's the reason? Words spoken by David 3,000 years ago. The physical evidence is still there in the land of Israel today. This is no theory!

You will remember that the prophet Elisha had a servant named Gehazi. Now Gehazi disobeyed Elisha and ran off to Naaman after he had been miraculously healed. He asked for money and clothing and hid it from Elisha. When he came back Elisha said,

> *"Didn't my spirit go with you?"*

Then he said this:

> *"The leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and your descendants forever."*

And Gehazi went out a leper as white as snow.

What was that the result of? A curse pronounced by a man of God.

In the New Testament we find in Mark 11:12, 13:

> *"Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, he was hungry. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, he went to see if perhaps he might find something on it. And when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs."*

I have been told that in that type of fig tree, before the figs come there is a small round thing which comes first. The Arabs call this a name that means 'that which falls'. Jesus was not so unreasonable as to expect figs when it was not the time. But the lesson is that if a tree doesn't bring forth the preliminary thing it will not bring forth figs either. So Jesus knew that tree was fruitless. And what did He do? He spoke to the tree. Does that make sense? He said,

> *"Let no-one eat fruit from you ever again."*

His disciples heard it. Perhaps they thought, "Our Master has gone just a little bit too far." But going on now to verse 20:

> *"Now in the morning as they passed they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots."*

So, twenty-four hours later the tree was totally dry.

> *"And Peter, remembering, said to him, 'Rabbi, look! The fig tree which you cursed has withered away.'"*

Notice, he said to Jesus, *"You cursed it"*. The result was, it *"withered"*.

Let's look at a parallel passage in Matthew 21:20, 21, recounting the same incident.

> *"Now when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, 'How did the fig tree wither away so soon?' So Jesus answered and said to them, 'Assuredly, 1 say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was*

done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, "Be removed and be cast into the sea," it will be done.'"

What was done to the fig tree? It was cursed. But notice Jesus also authorised the disciples to curse things. He said, *"You will not only do what is done to this fig tree.*

If we could but realise it, the power that we have is frightening. But we are often like Moses when God called him to go back to Egypt and deliver Israel. He said, "I don't have anything—what can I go with?"

The Lord said to him, "What's that in your hand?", and he said, "A shepherd's staff." The Lord said, "Throw it on the ground," and what happened? When it touched the ground it became a snake, and Moses ran from the very thing he had been holding in his hand. God said that was all he was going to need —his staff. "Go to Egypt and do the job."

A lot of us are like that. We are holding a staff in our hand. We don't realise that if we throw it on the ground it can turn into a snake.

Let me tell you a true story. About 1965 I was Associate Pastor in a church in Chicago. Right on the corner, flush with the church, wall to wall with it, was a pub. Not only did they sell alcohol, but it was a place of prostitution and of illicit drugs. We were having a prayer meeting at the church some time in October. I was on the platform—one of those leading the prayer meeting—and without premeditation, I stood up and said, "In the name of Jesus, I curse that pub." I didn't think much more about it.

Just about Christmas time at 4:00 a.m. there was a phone call in our house. "Brother Prince, the church is burning; would you like to come and see it?" It was probably 20° below zero and I thought, "No, I don't really want to go and see it." Then I thought, "If I don't go and show an interest in the church burning, people might think I'm pretty indifferent." So my first wife, Lydia, and I got into the car and drove down.

When we got near the place, there were the flames up in the

sky and the smoke rising in billows. When we got there we discovered it wasn't the church, it was the pub that was on fire! But the wind was blowing off Lake Michigan, and blowing the flames right on to the church. As we got there the wind changed 180° and blew the flames in exactly the opposite direction, away from the church. The result was that the pub was completely destroyed and the church suffered nothing but smoke damage. The Fire Chief on the Chicago Fire Brigade said to one of the elders, "You people must have a special relationship with the Man upstairs!"

Do you know what that was the result of? A curse. When I saw what had happened I thought, "Brother Prince, you had better be pretty careful what you pray from now on!" I was like Moses—I was scared of what I had in my hands!

3. People with Relational Authority

Here is another source of curses which is very important. God has so ordered human society that in certain situations one person has authority over another person or persons.

The most obvious example is a father, who, according to the Word of God, has authority over his family. Whether people like it or not, whether they fight it or not, is unimportant—the fact is, he has authority over his family. If he doesn't use it, that does not alter the fact. Still he has authority.

Another person who has authority, is the husband over his wife. The Bible says God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of the husband, the husband is the head of the woman. Feminists can say what they like about it, but the fact remains that it is true. You can't change it by objecting to it.

So let's take the case of Jacob and his family. Jacob had served for a long time, more than fourteen years, with his uncle, Laban. He had acquired two wives and concubines and eleven children. Then he decided to flee back to the land that God had promised him. He fled secretly because he was afraid that his uncle, Laban, would claim back his daughters—who were now Jacob's wives. Laban pursued him and eventually caught up with

him quite near the boundary of the land of Canaan.

When they fled, Rachel, who was Laban's daughter and the second wife of Jacob, stole her father's household gods. First of all he shouldn't have had household gods, and secondly she shouldn't have stolen them. But she did.

Laban was extremely angry because the household gods had been taken. So when he caught up with Jacob, Laban asked why he had left without saying goodbye, and why he had stolen his household gods. Of course Jacob didn't know that Rachel had taken them, and Rachel succeeded in keeping them hidden from Laban. Jacob was very indignant because he had been accused of stealing his father-in-law's gods, and so he said,

> *"With whomever you find your gods, do not let him live" (Genesis 31:32).*

Now that's a curse, and it was pronounced by Jacob, the husband of Rachel, who had authority over Rachel. They were not empty words; they were words that were charged with his authority.

Do you know what happened? The next time Rachel had a child, she died in childbirth. Without knowing it, Jacob had pronounced the destiny of his wife. Such things still happen today.

Another person that I have already mentioned is a father.

Second to the blessing of God, the most desirable thing in life is a father's blessing. Conversely, one of the things to be feared most is a father's curse. Many fathers have put a curse on their children without knowing it. I know this because I have dealt with so many, and helped them out of it.

A father can have three children. The first is clever, the third is clever, but the middle child is not really so bright. So the father doesn't like the middle child. (I have noticed this about parents—if there is one they don't like, it is usually the one that is most like themselves. It is easier to recognise the fault in their child than in themselves.) So the father says to this child, "You'll

never make good. You'll never succeed. Your brothers will do well, but you'll be a failure all your life."

Do you know what that is? A curse. You'd be amazed how many people struggle all their way through life because of a parental curse pronounced upon them.

Another kind of person who can pronounce a curse is a teacher. A teacher has authority over his or her pupils. It may be that a teacher in the early years has one pupil whom she just can't get on with. She says things like, "You'll never learn. You just always get things wrong, you'll never succeed."

What's that? A curse. Again, I have dealt with people who have had to be delivered from a curse pronounced by a teacher.

Another person who can do such a thing is a pastor, because a pastor has spiritual authority over his congregation. Suppose a pastor has a clash with a member of his congregation and that person leaves, maybe in a bad spirit. The pastor says, "Wherever you go, you'll never succeed. Until you put things right with this church you will never get on anywhere."

Do you know what that is? It's a curse. Religious groups are often at fault in this way. If you break away from some groups they will automatically put a curse upon you. Believe me, that is not something of little consequence. It is real.

4. Self-imposed Curses

Self-imposed curses are curses that people pronounce on themselves. They are very common. We will go back to the story of Isaac and Rebekah. You will remember that Rebekah was persuading Jacob to obtain Isaac's blessing by deception. But Jacob was afraid of being found out. He said,

> *'"Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be a deceiver to him; and I shall bring a curse on myself and not a blessing.' But his mother said to him, 'Let your curse be on me, my son.'"* (Genesis 27:12, 13)

In other words, "It will come on me, not on you." She pronounced the curse on herself. Later on in the chapter she

complained to her husband Isaac that Esau had married wives she did not approve of. Rebekah wasn't getting things the way she wanted them and she said to Isaac,

> *"I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, like these who are the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?"* (Genesis 27:46)

She pronounced a double curse on herself. She said she was weary of her life and asked what the good was of living—she might as well die.

I cannot tell you how many people we have dealt with who have pronounced a curse on themselves by saying, "I wish I were dead. What's the good of living? I'm not going to make it." You don't have to say that very often. It's like an invitation to the spirit of death, and he does not need many invitations—he will come in. We have seen scores of people delivered from the spirit of death that came in through such negative talk.

At one meeting in Northern Ireland, I was speaking to an audience of about 2,000 people and I felt led to pray a collective prayer for people who needed deliverance from the spirit of death. About 50 people received simultaneous deliverance! Most of them were young people.

How does it come in, this attitude of hopelessness? "It's no good living. What's life got to offer to me? I might as well be dead." It's a terribly dangerous thing to say. You are really pronouncing a curse on yourself. The devil is the one who tricks you into saying that—often for very inadequate reasons—a fit of pique or discouragement. Yet you are settling your own destiny!

One other tragic example from the New Testament is described in Matthew 27:24, 25. The scene is the trial of Jesus by Pontius Pilate.

> *"When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just person. You see to it.' And all the people*

answered and said, 'His blood be on us and on our children.'"

That was a self-imposed curse. You really cannot understand the history of the Jewish people over the last nineteen centuries until you understand that one major factor in it is a self-imposed curse that goes on from generation to generation to generation —*"His blood be upon us and our children."* In that context, the word 'children' means each succeeding generation. How tragic!

Yet this is beginning to change. Since 1989 I have been present at two meetings in Israel when Jewish leaders of Messianic congregations publicly confessed this sin on behalf of their people and asked God for release from it. Thank God, release is possible because on the cross Jesus prayed,

> *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34).*

5. Men Representing Satan

Witch doctors—called by various names in various nations —are experts at curses. That's their profession, and they are very skilful at it. In East Africa, when I was principal of a college for training teachers, one of my students from a remote mountain area told me this story.

In his village two families quarrelled and one family went to the witch doctor, paid him a goat, and said, "Put a curse on the other family." The witch doctor said, "Alright. At midnight on a certain night, a jackal will cry in the village and the son of that family will die." At midnight a jackal cried, and the son died. If he didn't die of anything else, he would have died of sheer fright!

Once when Ruth and I were in Zambia, we offered to pray for barren women who couldn't have children. Out of a large group of about seven thousand people we called for women in that condition and about four hundred came forward for prayer.

Before we prayed for them we told the interpreter to ask them how many of them had been to a witch doctor to get a potion or a charm to enable them to have children. Out of four

hundred, there were only two who did not raise their hands.

Parts of Africa are totally dominated by witch doctors. Everything in people's lives is controlled by the unseen spiritual power of the witch doctors. When we came with this message about the release from the curse, it produced one of the most dramatic changes I have ever seen in people. After they had listened to my teaching and repeated the prayer of release after me, those people were visibly transformed. Up to that time you hardly saw them smile, but from then on they were some of the happiest people. The change was like from night to day.

When I walked down from the platform one well-dressed man, obviously well-to-do, came up and rolled himself in the dust at my feet, which is their way of expressing appreciation. He said to the interpreter, "I've been a wretched man all my life. I've been in continual pain for years. Now I am free. I have no more pain, and I am happy." His face was radiant. Yet all we had done for him was to release him from the curse.

We have become so civilised in some places that we have lost touch with some things that are very real. But they are still real, even if we don't believe in them. You can say you don't believe in viruses, but if you get one you'll get sick! Curses are as real as viruses.

The example in the Bible is Balaam the witch doctor. The King of Moab knew he couldn't defeat Israel in war so he hired Balaam and asked him to pronounce a curse on them

> *"because I know the one you curse is cursed, and the one you bless is blessed" (Numbers 22:6).*

That's typical. Most African tribes preparing for battle will get the witch doctor to put a curse on their enemies. They then believe they will be able to defeat them.

6. Soulish Prayer or Utterances

> *"But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual,*

demonic." (James 3:14, 15)

James is talking about two kinds of wisdom, one of which is not God's wisdom. He says that it has three characteristics—earthly, then, in Greek, *"soulish"* (i.e. not of the spirit), and finally demonic.

There are some people whose prayers you would be better off without. That sounds shocking, but some people seek to control you by their prayers. They have their own ideas about where you should live, or whom you should marry, or what form your ministry should take. Yet their ideas do not come from God. They generate a soulish pressure that may even be demonic and that keeps you from finding what really is God's will for you.

Or people may just sit and talk about you. Christians criticising one another, talking about one another, running one another down generate a negative power that's released against the people they talk about.

It's very important to know where your problem is coming from. Sometimes it is coming from people quite close to you. There have been men who have been sick for years because their wife had a death wish for them. There are a lot of things we don't fully understand in the human soul, yet they have great power for good and for evil. If the soul is under the control of the Holy Spirit it will be for good, but if it is under other forces it can be just as powerful for evil.

7. Unscriptural Covenants

In Exodus 23:32 God warned Israel about the nation whose land they were about to enter. They were all wicked, idolatrous nations, and God said to Israel:

> *"You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods."*

If you make a covenant, which is a very solemn agreement, with people who are under the power of evil forces, you come under that same power. This is particularly true of secret

societies. In America, for instance, the Klux Klan, and worldwide the Freemasons. The latter is a sure road to disaster for your descendants. It is impossible to estimate the number of crippled, retarded, unhappy children whose problems go back to a parent or other ancestor in the Freemasons. You may think what you like about it, but the consequences are ordered by God, and you can't change them.

As Christians, we are all in a covenant relationship with one another through the blood of Jesus. The only other covenant that is valid for Christians is the covenant of marriage between a man and his wife. To enter into a covenant relationship with people on any other basis but these can be extremely dangerous. A covenant has a very powerful effect on the lives of those who enter into it. If it is a scriptural covenant, its effect will be a blessing. But if it is unscriptural, its effect will be a curse.

Forms that Blessings and Curses Take

To study this theme in detail, one chapter of the Bible is devoted solely to it—Deuteronomy 28. The first fourteen verses deal with blessings and the remaining fifty-four verses deal with curses. When you have read that list of curses, you should decide that you want no part of them! The source of both blessings and cursings is clearly stated.

> *"Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all his commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God."*
> *(Deuteronomy 28:1, 2)*

What is the basic cause of blessing? It is listening diligently to the voice of God and doing what He says. That's the basis on which God blessed Abraham. He said, *"All these blessings shall come upon you because you have obeyed My voice."* Actually, you do not need to go running after the blessings. What you need to do is meet the conditions; God will take care of the

blessings. And then in verse 15 and onwards we come to the curses.

> *"But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all his commandments and his statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you."*

What's the cause of the curses? Not listening to the voice of the Lord and not doing what He says. It is basically very simple.

If you wish, you can read through that whole list of blessings and curses for yourself, but I will give you my very brief summary. You can check for yourself.

Summary of the Blessings

Exaltation (being lifted up) Health
Reproductiveness (in every area of your life)
Prosperity
Victory
God's favour

One of the simple statements of blessing is, "You'll be above only and not beneath, you'll be the head, and not the tail." I asked myself once, "What does it mean to be the head and not the tail?" The answer was simple: the head makes the decisions, the tail gets dragged around.

Which end are you—the head or the tail? Are you making the decisions? Are you taking the initiative? Are you determining the way things happen? Or are you at the mercy of circumstances, under financial pressure, health pressure, family pressure, and just being dragged around? If you're the tail it's a curse, if you're the head it's a blessing.

Summary of the Curses

Humiliation
Inability to reproduce in any area of your life
Mental and physical sickness

Family breakdowns
Poverty
Defeat
Oppression
Failure
God's disfavour

Now, I'll give you my own little list which is based on personal experience and observation over the years. I made it independently of Deuteronomy 28. I list seven factors which, once discovered in peoples lives, lead me to conclude that they are probably under a curse:

1. Mental and emotional breakdown.

If emotional breakdown happens just once in one life, there could be other causes, but if it is a thing that recurs frequently in a family, you can be sure that that family is under a curse.

2. Repeated or chronic illness.

This is particularly significant when there is no clear medical diagnosis. If you go to the doctor and it is one thing; then you go back six months later and he says it is another; or if you have a pain that nobody can diagnose; and especially if these things run in families, I would say, almost certainly, that that family is under a curse.

3. Repeated miscarriages and related female problems.

Ruth and I pray for women with needs of that kind. Once we hear the diagnosis, we simply treat it as a curse. Without doing any further investigating, we have seen scores of people dramatically changed.

4. The breakdown of marriage and family alienation.

Witchcraft is home-breaker number one. Wherever that power goes to work in a family it will ultimately break up the family.

5. Continuing financial or material insufficiency.

Many people experience financial shortage at some time in their lives, but if it is only temporary, it is not necessarily a

curse. When insufficiency becomes a chronic condition, however, oppressing and enslaving, and when the best intentioned efforts yield no solution, then that almost certainly indicates a curse at work.

6. Accident prone.

When I meet people who are "accident prone", I really don't look any further. It is a statistically diagnosible condition. If you are accident prone an insurance company will put up your insurance premium simply on that basis! One common indicator is the repeated question: "Why does it always happen to me?"

7. A history of suicides or unnatural deaths.

A very conspicuous family that bears all the marks of this curse is the Kennedy family in America.

How to Pass from Curse to Blessing

First of all, you have to understand that full provision has already been made through the death of Jesus on the Cross. That's the way that God has made provision for every human need including release from a curse.

> *"Christ has 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'), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." (Galatians 3:13, 14)*

Notice the exchange—the death of Jesus on the cross, the atonement, was the exchange in which all the evil due to us came upon Christ, that all the good due to Him might be made available to us. He was wounded that we might be healed. He died that we might have life. He was made sin that we might be made righteous. He was rejected that we might be accepted. In particular, He was made a curse that we might enter into the blessing. That's the basis of God's provision for the problem discussed in this booklet.

You will notice that in that verse 13, the word 'curse' appears

three times. Christ has redeemed us from the 'curse', having become a 'curse', for it is written, '*cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.'* If a curse is so real that Christ had to be made a curse on the cross for us, then don't entertain the thought that there is no reality in a curse. God wouldn't have made provision at such cost for our deliverance from a curse if there was nothing to be delivered from. It took the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ to provide deliverance from the curse.

That's the basis of our deliverance. There is no other basis but faith in what Christ has done for us on the cross. Just as we are made righteous because He was made sinful, so we can receive the blessing because He was made the curse. The Law of Moses says, in Deuteronomy 21:23, that anyone hung on a tree becomes a curse. Every Jew who knew the Law of Moses, when they saw Jesus hanging on the cross, knew that He had been made a curse. Thank God the reason He was made a curse was that we might be delivered from the curse.

You need to bear in mind, however, that after you have been delivered you still have to go on meeting the conditions, which are listening to God's voice and doing what He says. In the New Testament, Jesus said in John 10:27,

> *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."*

So that's the prescription for blessing. But before you can enjoy the blessing, if there is a curse over your life, you must first be released from the curse. Through the death of Jesus release is already legally ours. He has already obtained it for us. What we have to do is move from the legal to the experiential; we have to get it working in our lives. The legal base is already there. God doesn't have to do anything more, we have to appropriate what God has already done for us. There are certain simple steps you need to follow.

Very often we need to ascertain the cause or the source of the curse—not always, but very often. That's why I have spent some time discussing the various possibilities. I have, been

trusting the Holy Spirit to speak to you as you read. You may suddenly see the reason why you have struggled all your life. It may come by supernatural revelation—many times it does. I am not saying you always need such a revelation, but in many cases God wants us to know what we are being released from, and how it came upon us. If God shows you, then act on what he shows you.

Process of Release

The basic pattern is stated in four words which begin with RE:

- RECOGNISE your problem and its cause.
- REPENT of anything that ever opened you to it.
- RENOUNCE the curse.
- RESIST every attempt of Satan to keep you under the curse.

Specific Steps

1. ***Establish a clear Scriptural basis***

> *"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us." (Galatians 3:13, 14)*

There are others: Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:13, 14; 1 John 3:8b; Luke 10:19.

2. ***Confess to your faith in Christ, because He is the High Priest of our confession (Hebrews 3:1).***
3. ***Commit yourself to obedience, because that is the condition for continuing in blessing.***
4. ***Confess any known sins of yourself or your ancestors.***

You are not personally guilty for any sins they may have committed, but you are affected by their consequences. For example, you may need to confess, "My aunt was a fortune teller," or, "My grandmother was in Christian Science," or, "My

father was a Freemason." You have to identify yourself with the sin in your family that brought the curse upon your family. You confess that sin on behalf of your family.

5. Forgive all other persons, and maybe the very person who is the cause of the curse.

If you don't forgive, unforgiveness is a barrier to the answer of your prayer. Jesus said, *"When you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anybody."* That leaves out nothing, and nobody. Remember forgiveness is a decision, it is not an emotion. Simply, it is tearing up the I.O.U.'s.

6. Renounce all contact with the occult or with secret societies.

Get rid of contact objects. You cannot keep in your house anything that in any way binds you to the occult—images, charms, Buddhas, tarot cards, etc. Moses warned Israel that if they took an accursed thing into their houses, they would become accursed like the thing (Deuteronomy 7:26).

I remember a lady judge in the United States who was miraculously healed when I prayed for her. She had been in pain for ten years night and day with an intestinal problem. She had adhesions and her insides had been sewn up with plastic clips. When God healed her, not merely did He take away the pain and heal the adhesions, He removed the clips! But the interesting thing is that in a sweepstake she earned a free holiday to Mexico. She and her lady friend went and came back.

The next day they phoned Lydia and me and were in desperation. They said that this lady had tried to commit suicide —she'd tried to drown herself in the bath. So Lydia and I went over and they said that they didn't know what had happened. Everything had been wonderful—"I was saved, I was healed." When I asked if they had brought back any souvenirs they thought for a while and then said that they had. One was a portrait of the sun god, so I told them to get rid of it immediately. That dear lady judge got up, went into the basement and broke it up into small pieces in the next five

minutes. When she did that there was no more problem. She had exposed herself by bringing an accursed thing into her home.

7. Release yourself in the Name of Jesus.

The Word of God says that whatever we release on earth will be released in heaven and whatever we bind on earth shall be bound in heaven (Matthew 18:18). If you have never confessed your faith in Christ before, and you don't know Jesus as your personal Saviour, you can get to know Him when you do this—it doesn't take God half a second to save somebody! In what follows, I will offer you a pattern prayer of release which you may repeat. When it comes to confessing sins, you may need to confess certain specific sins that you are conscious of.

Again, when you come to forgiving all other persons, you should name the person or persons involved. Very often they are the people closest to us. When you have done all this, you are legally entitled to full release from every curse over you or your family. However, the curse cannot be broken if you haven't met the conditions.

Sometimes when you say the prayer you may feel no change at all. On the other hand, sometimes the results are quite dramatic. Whatever happens, don't focus on the manifestation, focus on the reality of Christ in your prayers. If there are manifestations, don't let them upset you, just thank God that you are getting free.

Now here is a pattern prayer for you to repeat.

The Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, I believe that You are the Son of God and the only way to God; that You died on the cross for my sins and rose again from the dead.

I renounce all my sins and I turn to you. Lord Jesus, for mercy and for forgiveness, and I believe You do forgive me. From now on I want to live for You, I want to hear Your voice and do what You tell me.

In order to receive Your blessing, Lord, and to be released from any curse over my life, I confess any known sins committed by me, or by my ancestors, or others related to me... (add any personal details that are appropriate).

Lord, I thank You that I believe You have forgiven everything that I have confessed, and now I want to say I also forgive all other persons, whoever has harmed me or wronged me. I forgive them all now as I would have God forgive me. In particular, I forgive... (add any names that are appropriate).

Furthermore, Lord, I renounce any contact by myself, or anyone related to me, with Satan, or with occult power in any form, or any kind of secret society. Also, I commit myself to remove from my house any kind of occult objects that honour Satan and dishonour Jesus Christ. With Your help, Lord, I will remove them all.

And now, Lord Jesus, I thank You further, that on the cross You were made a curse that I might be redeemed from the curse and might receive the blessing. Because of what You did for me on the cross, I now release myself from every curse, every evil influence, and every dark shadow over me or my family, from any source whatever. I release myself now, in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

Close by Thanking God

After a prayer like that, the purest and simplest expression of faith is to begin thanking God. Here are some ways you can thank God.

I thank you, Lord, that you have heard my prayer and that every curse over my life has been revoked and cancelled.

I thank you, Lord, that I have been delivered from the domain of darkness and translated into the kingdom of your love.

I thank you that Satan has no more claims against me or my family or anything else that you have committed to me.

I thank you, Lord, that from now on, as I walk in obedience, your blessings will come upon me and overtake me.

★★★★★

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DEREK PRINCE is highly respected as an international Bible teacher and author. He lives in Israel. Derek Prince Ministries International is based in the USA.

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