

God Turns a Curse Into a Blessing

Numbers 23:7-12, Trinity Sunday III

June 28, 2009

Beloved of the Lord.....There are indeed times in our life where we feel cursed far above all men and there are times in our life we feel we are blessed above all men. There are good days and bad days. Christians have days of joy and sorrow. Job said, Shall I receive good at the hand of the Lord and not evil? What matter most in our walk of faith, our walk with Jesus, the Lord our righteousness, what matter most is that our faith is built upon the sure merits of Christ, His mercy, His grace, the holiness of His blood shed for the remission of our sins. When faith is built upon His Word, it matter not if we feel forsaken by God, or even cursed, for we know that through Christ we only receive His highest blessings, hence even the evil we suffer is for our own good. Let us therefore look at how God turned a curse into a blessing, and let us ever rejoice that "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us....That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

And he took up his parable, and said, Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel. With God's blessing, the army of the Israelites had just soundly defeated the Amorites and Balak knew his people, the Moabites were next. He therefore bribed a powerful prophet named Balaam to curse these Israelites. Regarding the blessing and cursing of people, God's second commandment reveals we should fear and love God that we may not curse or swear. It is quite a contradiction when believers use their tongue to bless God and sing His praises but then use the same tongue to curse and swear at people or say hateful words of anger. James writes, "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be." God is the silent listener to every conversation? First Peter one says, "as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." At all times our words should be used for good and not evil.

As for Balaam, not only were his words evil, but he was a soothsayer, diviner or wizard. Though he knew the True God, he did not follow Him, but he used Satan's power to do great but evil works. Speaking of Balaam and all false prophets the Bible says they have "eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls.....Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." It was Balak's bribe of wealth which moved Balaam to attempt to curse the children of Israel. This serves both as a warning to all Christians, especially ministers, not to compromise the truth of God's Word for the love of earthly gain. Each minister should instead say, **Must I not take heed to speak that which the LORD hath put in my mouth?** Yet how many ministers do you suppose have compromised God's Word so that they

could have a bigger church, or a bigger salary? Speaking of Balaam and all false prophets the Bible says they are, "Wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error." False prophets lead sincere Christians away from the cleansing blood of Christ, so that they believe they can cleanse themselves by their good works!

Dear Christian, for the sake of your soul, listen closely to what I'm saying! False prophets always appear to have great and profound wisdom. What they say may be very pleasing to the ear. They will appeal to your natural pride, your natural self-righteousness so that your faith and confidence rests upon what you do rather than what Christ has done. I still recall listening to a recorded sermon of a popular preacher not far from here. Though I can't remember if his false doctrine was decision theology or double predestination, what I do remember is that he preached of all these good works we would be able to do, and how our life would change if only we believed this "truth". It all sounded so good, it all sounded so nice.....but as a minister, I knew exactly what he was doing. He was appealing to my pride, my self-righteousness. He was presenting to me a glorious picture of the ideal Christian life filled with good works and "All this can be yours if only you believe what I'm saying." He might as well have been the snake in tree speaking to Eve, "If only you eat of this fruit, you shall be as God."

Wells without water, clouds carried away with a tempest, are powerful preachers who do not preach the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. They are like a fog which blows in from the ocean but does not bring any rain. They can quote the Scriptures left and right but they do not teach that Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God who has ALREADY by His blood shed on the cross taken away the sins of the world and that faith alone is needed in him if we wish to be saved! Wells without water do not teach that even now God through Christ IS ALREADY IN HIS HEART reconciled and at peace with EVERY sinner. Be careful dear soul when you listen to any so-called prophet of this earth.....is his focus on the works of man or is his focus on THE work of God, Jesus Christ and His blood atonement of the cross? Is his Gospel a "free gift" or does his gift come with strings attached? The true Gospel then tells us through Christ God has ALREADY justified and declared the whole world as righteous. You then dear sinners have truly been forgiven all your sins through the blood of your Savior who yet loves you with an everlasting love. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

It is because of this Gospel promise, God's blessing is always upon His people, no matter where we might be in this wilderness of sin. This was also why the false prophet Balaam could not curse the Israelites. **How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see Him, and from the hills I behold Him.** Balaam, Balak and company stood at the top of a mountain as they looked down upon the camp of Israel! They literally saw the camp

of Israel with perhaps over a million people - yet Balaam spoke of them in the singular.....I see Him.....from the hills I behold Him. Perhaps he spoke of the cloudy pillar above the people, God's visible presence. Perhaps he spoke of the people as one because of the unity of the True Church. Perhaps God even opened the eyes of Balaam so he could literally see the Lord watching over the people. In any case it was clear God was their constant Protector and Defender every day they were in that wilderness. Israel could not be touched, nor would God allow any harm to befall them. Psalm 62 says, "He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.

Thus Balaam said **Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.** God's people are those whose faith rests in Christ. When God says you dwell alone, He only means He has consecrated you, set you aside AS HIS OWN BELOVED AND CHOSEN PEOPLE, the sheep of His pasture. Hence believers are not reckoned or counted among the unbelieving nations. Without Christ they are only cursed and with Christ we can only be blessed. Psalm 7:11 say, "God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day." Every day God is angry at all unbelievers because they continually reject the Son of Man who only came to save. They willingly live in sin and unbelief, though Christ willingly made their sins His own on the cross so all would be delivered from sin. God's curse upon them then is their own fault, while God's blessing upon us is God's glory alone. For "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."

Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his! Balaam now reaches the climax of his God-given ecstasy! Oh that I would die the death of God's righteous people - namely His believers, His saints! I wish my end would be like his! God here reveals to all believers what a blessed thing it is to die IN THE LORD! Revelation 14:13 says, "Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth." Thus we need not fear this last enemy of death for death itself was soundly defeated when Christ rose from the dead to life! O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory! "Thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

This is why dear Christian, though outwardly you will indeed be weary of all the pains and struggles of life, inwardly your heart can yet rejoice that through Christ, God's blessing is still upon you. "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day." His grace WILL sustain you dear believer and you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. Even now the Lord knows just what you are going but He doesn't want you to despair but remember He is your hope. In His Word you have His constant assurance that He will always be with you through thick and thin and that He will never ever EVER forsake you. You

are the lamb for whom He died and rose again. Above all things remember that your Lord is All-wise, and therefore your future is in His capable hands. The grace of God which rules all things today, will likewise rule all things tomorrow. God will never give you more than you can bear, and in His Kingdom of Grace days of gladness follow days of sadness.

Finally after Balaam blessed God's people rather than cursed them, Balak in anger said, **What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and behold thou hast blessed them altogether.** These final words are blessed words also, for they teach us that God turned the curse into a blessing. This truth shines most brightly through the cross. For on the cross Christ was willingly cursed by God for our sake, yet through Christ this curse was made a blessing to all men. This is why faith alone in Him is needed for salvation, for through the holy blood of Christ, all the nations of the earth are blessed. If you then as a sinner know thirst then for the forgiveness of sins, drink the living waters of Christ. From His holy wounds of Christ flow living water, namely an endless fountain of forgiveness for all sins. It is Jesus Christ Himself then who is that well of water to which our thirsty soul can go. Jesus said, "whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Let us ever rejoice then dear believer Christ is the True Prophet upon which our faith can always rest. This is why, dear believer, God can do nothing but bless you all the days of your life, as long as your faith is in Jesus. From Christ flows all of God's blessings, both spiritual and temporal, so that you will never ever lack anything you truly need. Through Christ, all nations of the earth are blessed, and through Christ we daily receive God's blessing and not His curse!

From this lesson we should see that wherever we may be in this wilderness of sin, our Lord is our constant protection and defense from all harm and danger. Psalm 7 says "He is my defense...shall not greatly be moved.

Balak then represents the kings of this earth which make war with and persecute the Church. They will never be successful for no matter how greatly they may curse us and seek our ruin, our God continually turns their curse into a blessing. He can use their evil for good. In Balak's fear of the Israelites, there is also the hint of Satan fear and dread of God. He knows that when God makes His final judgment, it is nothing but hell and damnation for the devil and his host. While Satan is indeed powerful and he can seduce through false prophets, we of the Church rejoice that Christ has already conquered the devil, and the God of peace shall bruise Satan shortly under our feet. Thus we will have our battles, there will be times we thirst or are hungry, persecuted, etc., yet through Christ we are more than conquerors. Hence Paul writes, persecuted but not forsaken.....