

## **Blessing or Curse You Can Choose - Derek Prince**

### **Wrestling with Shadows Chapter 1**

To the superficial observer, human life presents a confused mingling of light and shadow, arranged according to no recognizable pattern, governed by no discernable laws. Across this scene two men may start out walking side by side. Similar in background and ability, they are headed in the same direction. Yet one walks almost always in the light of success and fulfilment. The other, close by him, scarcely sees the light. He is continually overshadowed by failure and frustration and his life is snuffed out at an untimely age. Neither of these men understands the forces at work in his life. The sources of light and shadow are hidden to them both. Probably they have never even considered the possibility that both light and shadow may have their source in previous generations.

The Bible speaks plainly about these forces. In fact, it has a great deal to say about them. It calls them respectively blessings and curses. Let us look closer, for a moment, at the man under the shadows. He does all the right things: changes his job or place of residence; acquires further vocational skills; studies all the latest literature on positive thinking. Perhaps he even takes a course on how to release some mysterious “potential” within himself. Yet success eludes him. His children are rebellious, his marriage under strain, accidents and illnesses routine. His cherished goals slip through his fingers like water through the fingers of a drowning man. He is “haunted” by a sense of inevitable failure, which he can perhaps postpone, but never overcome. All his life he has the sense of struggling against something he cannot identify—something amorphous and elusive. He feels at times as if he is wrestling with a shadow. No matter how hard he struggles, he cannot pinpoint the cause of his problem or get a grip on it. Often he feels like giving up.

“What’s the use?” he exclaims. “Nothing ever goes right for me! My father had the same problems. He was a failure, too!”

The person under the shadows could just as well be a woman, of course. She has married young and started out with all sorts of plans for a successful marriage and a happy home. She finds herself, however, on an invisible teeter-totter—“up” one day and “down” the next.

Physically, she goes from one problem to another, always on the verge of health, but never quite achieving it. Her son begins to abuse drugs and then her husband leaves her. One day she wakes up to the shocking realization that she herself has become an alcoholic. Like the man under the shadows, this woman, too, did all the right things. She studied books on nutrition and child psychology. In her pursuit of success, she goaded herself on from one effort to the next—each one demanding all the strength that she could muster. Yet she watched other women, with less motivation or qualifications, achieve the goals she herself could never attain.

As you look closer at the person under the shadows, perhaps you see something that reminds you of yourself. You feel as if you are looking at your own life—but somehow from a point outside yourself. With a shock, you begin to wonder if the cause of your problems could be the same: a curse going back to preceding generations. Or again, it may not be yourself that you see, but someone close to you—a spouse or a family member or a dear friend. You have often agonized over this person and longed for some ray of hope, but always in vain. Now you are confronted with a possible explanation of the shadows, which is a new idea to you. Could the root of the problem really be a curse?

Your mind goes back to events and situations in your life or your family that never seemed to make sense. You tried many times to dismiss them from your thoughts, but never completely succeeded. You realize that you need to know more. Suppose I am the one under a curse, you may say to

yourself. What can I do? What could be its source?

A curse could also be likened to a long, evil arm stretched out from the past. It rests upon you with a dark, oppressive force that inhibits the full expression of your personality. You never feel completely free to be yourself. You sense that you have potential within you that is never fully developed. You always expect more of yourself than you are able to achieve. Or again, that long, evil arm may have the effect of tripping you up as you walk. Your way seems clear before you, but from time to time you stumble—yet you cannot see what it was you stumbled over. For some uncanny reason, the moments at which you stumble are those when you are within reach of attaining some long-sought goal. Yet your goal eludes you.

Actually, the word uncanny could be likened to a red warning light. You experience events or situations for which you can find no natural or logical reason. It seems that there is some force at work that is not completely subject to the usual laws of nature or of averages.

There is one word that sums up the effects of a curse: frustration. You reach a certain level of achievement in your life and everything looks set for a bright future. You have all the obvious qualifications—and yet something goes wrong! So you start all over again and reach the same level as before, but once again things go wrong. After this happens several times, you realize that this is the pattern of your life. Yet you cannot see any obvious reason for it. Many people have shared with me the story of a life that has a similar pattern. The individual details may differ, but the pattern is there. Often such people say something like, “The same thing always happened to my father. I feel as if I’m reliving his frustrations,” or, “I can hear my grandfather saying again and again, ‘Things never go right for me.’”

This pattern may occur in various areas of people’s lives: business, career, health or finance. Nearly always it has some kind of negative effect on personal relationships— especially marriage and family. Frequently, too, it affects not just one isolated individual, but a larger social group. Most often this would be a family, but it can extend to a wider circle, such as a community or a nation.

It would be misleading, however, to suggest that a curse always causes a person to fail. A person may achieve what appears to be real success and yet be plagued by frustration, never enjoying the fruits of success. On a ministry journey in Southeast Asia I met an intelligent, well-educated female judge, who was descended from royalty. She knew Jesus personally as Saviour and was not conscious of any unconfessed sin in her life. Yet she told me that she was not truly satisfied. Her successful career and her high social position had not brought her personal fulfilment. As I talked with her, I discovered that she was descended from many generations of idol worshippers. I explained to her that, according to Exodus 20:3–5, God had pronounced a curse on idol worshippers down to the third and fourth generations. Then I showed her how to receive release from this curse through Jesus her Saviour.

Sometimes curses may not have their origin in previous generations. They may be the result of deeds or events in your own lifetime. Or it may be that a curse from previous generations has been compounded by things you yourself have done. Whatever the source of your problem, however, one thing is certain: You are struggling with something that you can neither identify nor understand. Like that judge, you, too, may have tasted success. You do indeed know the sweetness of it—but it never lasts! Suddenly, for no reason you can explain, you are dissatisfied. Depression settles over you like a cloud. All your achievements seem so insubstantial. You look at others who appear content in similar circumstances and you ask yourself, What’s wrong with me? Why don’t I ever experience real fulfilment?

Perhaps at this point your reaction is something like this: Some of these descriptions really fit me.

Does that mean there is no hope for me? Do I have to go on like this for the rest of my life? No, there is hope for you! Do not be discouraged. As you read on, you will discover that God has provided a remedy and you will be given simple, practical instructions on how to apply the remedy in your own life. Meanwhile, you will find encouragement in the following letters I received from two people who listened to my radio Bible teaching programme on the theme "From Curse to Blessing". The first letter is from a man and the second from a woman.

"I listened to your messages on the curse and I found out that I had been under one for years and never knew it. I was never able to be successful in life and constantly suffered from feelings of homosexuality, though I never fuelled the feelings into action. I have been a Christian for 10 years now but because of the curse was never able to get as close to God as I wanted to. I became very depressed. Since I have been freed from this curse I have felt so free in Jesus and alive in Him. I have never felt so close to God!"

"Thank you for your recent broadcasts on curses and your booklet "From Curse to Blessing". My life has been greatly changed by them. For most of my life I have been troubled by recurring depression and altogether for five years I have been under the care of a psychiatrist. This spring a lady prayed with me and for me and I renounced all involvement with the occult, such as tarot cards and tea leaves. Praise the Lord, the beginning of real freedom! Then I heard your broadcasts on being under a curse without really knowing it and prayed with you as you prayed the prayer of release from curses. Now I am free! It is as if a dam has broken and God can move in my spirit. The blockage is gone and I have grown so much spiritually in a few weeks that I can only praise Him for His blessing. Sometimes I weep when I think about all He has done and is doing for me and it is such a relief to be able to relax."

Truly, we worship a wonderful God!