

Blessed Or Not Blessed?

That is the question! For thousands of years, the Jews attested that one who prospered much in this life was obviously approved by God. This belief held so firmly that even the apostles asked Jesus in John 9:2, "*Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*" The association of blessings with approval from God is ingrained in other cultures as well, with many holding to the standard that they will ONLY do good if it is rewarded. This leads to a prideful and arrogant heart, with the person saying, "I don't need blessings from God, I can do it on my own. Therefore, I will not go out of my way to serve Him." Pretty flawed reasoning, wouldn't you say?

But yet how many of us think something like this all the time, whether out loud or subconsciously? Everything falls into place, our lives are going well, and situations are taken care of. "Look at this, I must be doing something right." Are you? Jesus advised His followers about this in Matthew 5:45, "*He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*" Neither the sun nor the rain mean that we are approved or disapproved by God, but simply that the weather systems are still operational.

Consider this object lesson: Assyria's destruction of Israel. Isaiah 10 discusses how Assyria will be the "*rod of My (God's) anger*" against the nation of Israel, and will "*capture booty*" and "*seize plunder.*" From an Assyrian perspective, this is good news! They will be victorious against a rival nation and will conquer their lands, a feat which many will consider a blessing. But yet, in any of that, did God ever show His approval of Assyria? Rather in Isaiah 10:12-14, God says He will then judge them for their unrighteousness as well. This supposed "blessing" was not an approval of their actions, but rather God rising them up for His purpose.

Many times in our own lives, especially in the lives of those of the world, we perceive good or bad events that occur as a sign of either blessing or cursing. This becomes especially dangerous when we are prosperous during a not-so-holy time in our lives, assuming, subconsciously, that God approves of our actions, when in fact He does not. We need to remember that times of prosperity and downfall do not necessarily lie with our path of integrity. Test your actions against the Bible, truly see if you are acting in accordance with Him, and take not the physicality of this life as a standard of godliness.

Paul exhorts the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 5:3 to always keep watch, to not be slack in waiting for the coming of the Lord. He says that those who cry "*Peace and safety*" will be the ones whose destruction is so sudden. It is

the ones who have been lackadaisical in their service, thinking approval when the truth is disgust, that God will bring to a swift and sudden realization. The question truly is, what blessing is the standard you want to guide your life? Those who live by the earth's rules and standards will perish with the earth, while those who make their standard of life with the Bible will continue to increase their holiness despite secular circumstances.

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