Chapter 8

GENERATIONAL CURSES

GENERATIONAL BLESSINGS

Some ten years ago I had an experience I remember very clearly: Late one night I lay in bed and for some reason started thinking about my father who had been dead about 20 years. Suddenly a "word" came to my mind: "You entered the ministry because of the prayers of your father." I was startled and amazed. I had never considered such a thing. My father was a committed Christian and one of the finest men I have ever known, but I never heard him pray aloud and never even thought about whether he prayed for me. That word from the Lord was a revelation to me about my father, the power of prayer, and the importance of a godly heritage.

While there are many Scriptural truths about generational sin and generational curses that are relevant to our lives, there are also wonderful insights in Scripture about generational blessings.

In Exodus 20 God gives to mankind his Ten Commandments, and in Verse 5 He states:
"I am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me," but in Verse 6 He says: "But showing mercy to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments." God's heart toward His people is further amplified in Deuteronomy 7:9:
"Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments." In this chapter in Deuteronomy God says that He is saving the Israelites from destruction because of the promise, the covenant, and the mercy "which He swore to your fathers." God also tells them that they are "a holy people" –not because of the godly way they had been living but simply because He had chosen them and set them apart for Himself before they were even born.

Does this sound familiar to you? In Ephesians 1:4-5, Paul writes about us: "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons of Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." God's ways are mysterious and inscrutable. He chose you and me before we were born, not because we were so smart and good looking and holy, but because He wanted to! However, according to teachings and examples in the Bible, one of the reasons He chose us was because of the prayers of our mother or father and because of our having a godly mother or father or grandmother or grandfather somewhere up the generational line. In this modern era we rarely consider that something as intangible as the prayers of our parents or the life lived by people in our family tree might really have an effect on our lives. Could it be so?

Pastor Jentzen Franklin relates the following: After Solomon had been king of Israel for many years he disobeyed God by accumulating many foreign wives who turned his heart to idolatry. God was very angry

at him and told him that He was going to take most of the kingdom away from him, but God said to him, "

I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David." (I Kings 11:12) This event occurred 20 years after David's death. Decades later Abijah, the great, great grandson of David, reigned in Jerusalem. Abijah was an evil king, but again God did not take the kingdom away from his family, "Because David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. (I Kings 15:5) This event occurred 79 years after the death of King David.

This same scenario played out time after time in the history of Jerusalem, but let me skip down to King Hezekiah, 11th in the line of great grandsons of King David. The King of Assyria brought a vast army and surrounded Jerusalem. Hezekiah humbled himself and prayed, and Isaiah the prophet received a word for him from God, concluding with this statement: "I will defend this city, to save it, for My own sake and for My servant David's sake." (2 Kings 19:34) God said this to King Hezekiah 305 years after the death of David! The life lived by the man who in his youth was a sheep herder so impressed God that God was still talking about it and blessing David's bloodline hundreds of years later! (In Strong's Concordance, David's name is referenced in over 7 pages of double columns, about 1,125 times. That is even more than Moses, who has 5 pages, about 925 references).

With regard to bloodlines, in the world of horse racing a bloodstock agent is a man who evaluates thoroughbred horses. When a scrawny little colt is trotted out before the bidders, the agent doesn't look primarily at the colt, he gets out his books and studies the bloodline. He looks at the records of papa and mama, the stallion and the mare, and their papas and mamas way up the line. A colt's worth is dependent on the victories that happened long ago in the bloodline. Apparently there is an angel with a bloodstock book in heaven, and he makes sure that God notices the victories won by every one of those in our preceding generations. They are credited to <u>our account!</u>

James Dobson related a story on television a number of years ago, and I hope I have the details straight: He said that his father became an evangelist in his denomination, and by the time that James entered his teens his father was so successful that he was booked 3 years in advance. Because of his father's success, he was, of course, gone from home much of the time. When James was about 15 years old, he started becoming rebellious. His mother finally called her husband and told him that she believed that if things did not change they were going to lose their son. James' father came home, called all of the pastors who had scheduled his meetings and cancelled them, and became the pastor of a small rural church so that he could devote his time to his wife and children. James' happiest memories are of times he spent with his father, hunting in the woods, and other occasions.

In due course, James became a psychologist and eventually developed a world-wide Christian ministry. Long before he achieved success, his father died, which was a terrible blow to him. After many years had passed, James' aunt, his father's older sister, came to a family reunion and told James that she had something she wanted to tell him in private. She said, "James, just before your father died, he went on a 3-day fast, and he told me that God spoke to him. God told him that since he had been faithful and had laid down his ambition for the sake of his son that God was going to use his son in a world-wide ministry that would touch millions of people." "So you see," James Dobson said, "my ministry and my success has not had anything to do with me, it is the fruit of my father's faithfulness and his prayers."

Someone might be saying, "But I come from a long line of pagans, how did I get in the door?" My response is, by God's mercy, just like everybody else. You were adopted into God's family. "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:29) So now you have a tremendous inheritance, and you can pass your blessings down to your children and grandchildren until the Lord comes.

A Time of Reflection

Take time to reflect on your parents and grandparents and all of your family.

Consider their difficulties, handicaps, weaknesses, strengths, and struggles. Ask God to reveal things about them you never knew.

Forgive them for their weaknesses and failures. Thank God for ways they blessed you. Thank Him especially if you were blessed by godly parents and a godly family tree.

Ask God to help you pass down a godly heritage to your family

GENERATIONAL CURSES

Joseph, a large muscular man with a gentle disposition, stood up in front of all his buddies who were attending the seminar and said, "Pastor, this is the third time I have been in prison for drugs and for stealing. My Daddy died in prison because of drugs and stealing. My 17 year old son is in jail right now for the same thing. I know that I have accepted Jesus and that I'm saved, but when I get out of here on parole in 3 months I don't want to keep doing the same thing over and over. I don't want to die in prison like my Daddy did. I don't want my sons to do the same thing. Can you help me?" I said, "I know Someone who can and will help you!" and led him through the steps of forgiveness, repentance, and breaking the generational curses over him and his family.

God is the Creator who combined the genes of our father and mother to determine who we would be physically, mentally and emotionally. That combination determined our physical looks: the color of our skin, the color of our hair, our eyes, and our frame, whether we would have big bones and so forth. Our IQ, whether we would have the talent of music or of mathematics, is derived directly from these genes. They even determined our personality in large measure. This genetic code is so amazing that it can be discerned even in a tiny drop of blood, a piece of hair, or a piece of fingernail. ¹

Who we are as individuals was pre-programmed into our genetic code. But then, of course, we were also greatly influenced by the modeling and example we had in our homes. Just think, for the first 18 years or so, we learned how to be a human being in the home of our parents. We learned language, how to think, the way to act, our parent's values, whether to view life positively or negatively. We received our spiritual training and example from them. So the major factors that influence our lives are: first, the genetic code; second, the modeling and example of our parents; and third, the law of sowing and reaping. Sowing and reaping refers to the teachings in the previous chapters on the consequences that come into

one's life when there is ongoing unforgiveness, judging and condemning of others and a failure to honor one's parents.

It is evident that certain diseases run in families, such as cancer, heart problems, diabetes, mental, and emotional problems. It is quite common to find families that are plagued with alcoholism, anger, or fear. It is also fact that if our parents stayed married, it gives us a better chance of staying married. If they divorced ,the likelihood is much greater, according to statistics, that we ourselves will divorce.

I believe the genetic code which has been discovered and described by science, and the law of blessings and curses that the Bible describes, are two ways to describe the physical and spiritual realities. Just as God created us with a unique physical body of skin, bones, muscles, and organs, so our human identity involves the blessings and the curses that are transmitted to us through our preceding generations.

Early in the scriptural record, God started revealing who He was to mankind. In Genesis 3:15, He identifies Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob--a generational God. In giving to mankind the Ten Commandments, God forbids idolatry.² in Exodus 20:3-4 and also reveals a generational aspect of God: "For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me and showing mercy to thousands to those who love me and keep My commandments."³

Iniquity is a word that is used over 200 times in the Bible and commonly means wickedness and unrighteousness. The root of the word means "crooked or bent or perverse" (see Psalm 125:5). In other words, iniquity is the crookedness inside a man's soul, the tendency towards a particular path of wickedness; and this iniquity, this tendency or weakness, passes down to succeeding generations.

Exodus 33 and 34 continues the revelation of who God is. God revealed His identity to Moses, and it was an eternal identification. Whatever was said about God and His basic nature in the Old Testament has to be the same in the New Testament if it is truly God, because God did not suddenly change His character. Jesus Christ, of course, fulfills God's self-revelation. Then, "The Lord descended in a cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the name of the Lord." God then listed eight characteristics that identify who He is. In describing Himself to man He was saying, "This is who I am.":

- merciful and gracious,
- long suffering
- abounding in goodness
- abounding in truth
- keeping mercy for thousands
- forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin
- by no means clearing the guilty
- visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the 3rd and the 4th generation.

Here are eight characteristics of God. God says, "I am merciful. I am gracious. I am long suffering, abounding in goodness. I forgive iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty." In other words, a part of God's self revelation is that He is just. He does not look the other way when man commits sins of rebellion and iniquity, but He has made provision for them through Christ. If we accept

what Christ did for us on the cross then we are forgiven and our iniquity is wiped away from our record. However, God is also saying: Take sin seriously; for it is rebellion against Me. He says that He is merciful and He is forgiving, BUT if we do not repent, if we do not humble ourselves and by faith receive the gift of His forgiveness through the sacrifice of Christ, then He will "by no means clear the guilty." Then He adds this strange statement: "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children to the 3rd and 4th generation." I am highlighting what to me seems a tremendous mystery: a part of the eight characteristics that describe God's revelation of Himself is that He will visit the iniquity of the fathers down through the generations. Inexplicably, God includes this statement in the list of character traits that define who He is. God's character is, of course, forever fixed. God, like His Son Jesus Christ, is the same yesterday, today and forever, and in Malachi 3:6, He says, "For I am the Lord, I do not change."

In Deuteronomy 10:12-13, God says that the fear and love of God are demonstrated by keeping His commandments. Jesus said in John 14:15, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." In Deuteronomy 11:26-28, God says to His people through Moses: "Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known."

When we counsel people we find time and again they are repeating the sins of their generations, and these family sins are clustered around one or more of the Ten Commandments. While counseling a young man about 30 years old he said to me, "My grandfather was a violent man and a murderer. He is said to have killed 12 men. My father was also a violent man and a murderer. Although it is a family secret, I found out that he had killed at least two or three men. When I get angry at someone I immediately start thinking how I might kill him. If the Lord doesn't help me I know that I will also become a murderer." He wanted to know how to break this generational pattern. I have ministered to many people where sexual sins of particular kinds came down through the family. People have told me that they were trapped in homosexuality, or adultery, or perversions of all kinds, and they said they were repeating the things that their father and mother and grandparents had done, and that their entire family (brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins) were likewise enmeshed in this same pattern. That it is an example of iniquity: a bent, a tendency in a family that is like evil magnetism pulling them to commit those same kinds of sins. The inherited tendency toward alcoholism is commonly recognized. An extensive study many years ago found that when infants were immediately removed from alcoholic parents and raised in homes where there was no alcohol, as the children grew to adulthood they were about 70% more likely to become alcoholics than the general population. Other people are drawn to stealing, occultism, or false religions.

As far as the Bible is concerned, this is not some strange doctrine, since the New Testament makes clear that a universal and general kind of iniquity comes down to all of us from Adam and Eve.⁵ This doctrine of generational curses simply states that, in addition to that universal iniquity, we are also subject to particular weaknesses or tendencies toward certain kinds of sins that are inherited. We don't have to look any farther than our own family to see the outworking of this principle.

Some people say, "That teaching about curses is in the Old Testament and only applied to those under the Old Covenant. Christ cancelled all curses on the cross, and now we are under the New Covenant." Actually, Christ did three tremendous things for us on the cross: First, He died for our sins. But we still struggle with sin and at times are overcome by it. So again and again we have to repent and appropriate by faith the indwelling victory over sin that Christ accomplished with his death. Second, He suffered for our sicknesses and by His stripes we were healed. But we still get sick, and we have to appropriate by faith His provision for our healing. Third, He became a curse for us and by His death on the cross took upon Himself the curses that we deserve. But we can still be drawn by the crookedness of our hearts and the weakness of our flesh in particular areas to fall back into sinful tendencies that have come down through our family tree. We might also be vulnerable to certain physical, emotional, and mental weaknesses and sicknesses that clearly have a genetic basis. It is reasonable that here, also, we need to appropriate by faith Christ's provision for breaking curses on us and on our families.

This is not to say that we are guilty because of what our parents did. In the book of Ezekiel, God makes clear that we are responsible only for our own sins: "The son who sins shall die, the son shall not bear the guilt of the father" and vice versa.6 In other words, we can't blame our parents for our sins; we are guilty for our own sins but are not guilty for our parents' sins. What the Word of God tells us is that we have within us this tendency, this bent, toward certain kinds of sins. Apart from Jesus Christ setting us free from those bents, we will likely follow that course. When will mankind finally be rid of all curses? When God creates a new heaven and a new earth, "there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him." This verse is found not in the book of Acts at the beginning of the Church Age, but in the final book of Revelation at its end.

What are the consequences of our iniquities?

- They separate us from God and hinder our prayers⁸
- They may cause weakness and loss of strength⁹
- They may also cause depression and physical sickness¹⁰
- They may cause spiritual captivity to the devil, and can lead us to death and hell¹¹

These terrible consequences are *not* God's desire for anyone. In fact, He repeatedly warns His people about the judgment that is coming so they will repent and turn to Him. God's heart and His desire is expressed by Jeremiah 30:17, following the dire warnings of the preceding section: (after His people repent) "For I will restore health to you and heal you of your wounds," says the Lord."¹²

As you look through the Bible you find sin patterns in families. Abraham lied about his wife Sarah to Pharaoh, saying she was his sister. Abraham's son Isaac lied about his wife Rebekah to another ruler, Abimelech, saying she was his sister. Jacob, the son of Isaac, lied to his father and deceived him so he would receive the blessing. Jacob's sons lied to him and deceived him about Joseph, saying he was killed by an animal. You can also see favoritism running down though the patriarchs. The kings were commanded in the Law of God not to multiply wives. David had six wives and about a dozen concubines but didn't seem to have enough so he took Bathsheba from her husband. Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines, so we can see the sin of David is multiplied greatly in his son. The apostles James and John were called "Sons of Thunder" because of their quick temper. As described in Luke 8:54, they wanted to call down fire from heaven to destroy a Samaritan village that did not receive Jesus. I wonder if their father wasn't the "Thunder" whose anger they inherited? Time and again, the sins of the fathers become the path of the children.

The good news is found in Galatians 3:13: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.'." Christ has redeemed us from

the curse of the Law, and He has come to set us free from these curses that come down through families. This wonderful, good news is recorded in Isaiah 53, starting in verse 4, "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows yet we esteem Him stricken smitten by God and afflicted, but He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed". Vs. 6, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Underlining is mine) So, our Lord Jesus Christ has taken our iniquities.

Let me use Joseph, the man in prison for drugs and stealing who was introduced at the beginning of this chapter, as an example of ways we can break the chains on people:

We led Joseph to:

- forgive his father for rejecting him, abandoning him, setting a bad example for him
- repent for judgments in his heart against his father, especially for drugs and stealing
- choose to honor the memory of his father
- confess the sins of his father, grandfather, and preceding generations and to forgive all of them
- forgive his father for cursing him, and to repent for cursing his father, God, and himself
- break the generational curses of drugs and stealing over him and his children and grandchildren by the authority of Jesus Christ who became a curse for us.
- resist the devil and draw near to God through prayer, Scripture study, fellowship, and other disciplines
- plan to get involved in a tight-knit fellowship when he gets out of prison, to stay away from his
 old friends (I tell the men they don't have to leave their friends, but invite them to come with
 them to church and Bible study. Let your friends decide whether to come with you or leave
 you.)

Connection of Generational Curses With Witchcraft Curses

I have come to see that curses that come down through the generations have two sources: (1) sins that were practiced by a parent, grandparent, etc., which gave legal rights to the enemy to invade a family (alcohol, drugs, occult, sex sin, violence, stealing, etc.)¹³ (2) witchcraft curses placed against a parent, grandparent, and/or his family.

As an example of witchcraft, consider the following: Some years past I held a seminar in a city in Colorado and ministered to Dorothy (age 28) and her mother, April. After I taught about generational curses, they told me their family history with automobile accidents. James, April's grandfather and the patriarch of the family, was an affluent farmer and the first man in his county in Oklahoma to own an automobile. In due course he had an auto accident that injured him, his wife Elizabeth, daughter Victoria, and granddaughter Jackie. In addition to these four injuries, following is a partial list of the subsequent plague of auto accidents involving family members and their relation to James:

Accidents resulting in death

•	George	son
•	Eugene	son (paralyzed for 2 years, then died)
•	Ruth	daughter (critical injuries, died after 3 years)
•	John	grandson

Fred son in law
Peter grandson in law
Jerry great grandson

• Jean granddaughter was driving, a close friend was paralyzed and died

Accidents resulting in injury

Johnnie granddaughter – brain damaged

Accidents where no one was hurt

• Dorothy great granddaughter – 5 accidents. Said she had such dread of getting in a car that it made life miserable for her

• April granddaughter – 2 accidents

In praying about this with April and Dorothy, we believe that God showed us the root of this plague. Apparently there were neighbors who were deeply envious and resentful toward James and his new automobile and who cursed him and his family. Those neighbors were probably involved in the practice of witchcraft or sorcery or Satanism, but perhaps that is irrelevant. Curses against a person open the door for the enemy to afflict them. According to the Bible, words have the power of life or death and may be used to bless or to curse others. I led Dorothy and April to forgive those who had cursed their family and by the authority of Jesus Christ to break those curses.¹⁴

After a year or more had passed, I telephoned Dorothy and asked her what had happened regarding auto accidents since our time of prayer. She told me she no longer experienced fear and dread when she rode in an auto, and there had been no accidents that she knew of until the week prior to my call when her mother April was driving a new car and was broadsided in a low speed accident in which no one was injured.

I struggled to assimilate this information. On the basis of the Bible and human experience there are most assuredly generational curses. The experience of April and Dorothy, both of whom are committed Christians, added to the experiences of an infinite number of other committed Christians demonstrate that generational curses do continue to afflict believers. The question is, do we have the authority to break those curses in the name of the Lord, and are they actually broken and do they stay broken? Does the fact that April just suffered another auto accident demonstrate that we don't have that authority?

My conclusion is that this teaching is valid, but since <u>breaking curses is a matter of spiritual warfare</u> we may have to press in until we have the victory. One time of ministry and prayer may not suffice. After all, Satan had a strong inroad, for instance in the family of Dorothy and April, for many generations and he does not easily surrender the ground he has stolen. Just as there are times when we must soak a person in prayer many times before he is healed (and I am not claiming that people are akways healed when we pray for them) so we may need to stand upon the word of God again and again to break curses over our loved ones of alcoholism, divorce, suicide, fear, chronic diseases, etc. That is what I counseled Dorothy and her family to do, and that is what I encourage you to do. We must "fight the good fight of faith" if we are to prevail. There are two seemingly contradictory things which we must learn to do: first, to have a spirit of humility, gentleness and love; secondly, to fight the good fight—against the enemy, not against people. "Do not be afraid. Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses!" ¹⁵

A Time of Reflection

What is the solution for the tendency toward certain sins, the curse that comes down through the generations and repeats itself in us and in our children? First we are to confess the sins of our ancestors (our parents, grandparents, and all the generations), and forgive them. We find many places in the Bible where men of God confessed the sins of the preceding generations: In Daniel chapter 9, in Ezra chapter 9, Nehemiah chapter 9, Leviticus chapter 26, Jeremiah chapter 14, Psalm 106, and others. Then confess your own sins, and break the curse over yourself and your family. Say something like this:

- I confess the sin of my ancestors and my own sin of______
- I release and forgive my ancestors for this sin and for the resulting curses. (Forgive specific people, such as your father and grandfather.)
- I repent of this sin and for yielding to it and the resulting curses. I ask You to forgive me,
- I renounce the sin of _____and break the power of all resulting curses through the redemptive work of Christ on the cross and His shed blood.
- I break all generational curses over my children and grandchildren.
- I forgive anyone who placed curses against my preceding generations or against me or my family.
- I reclaim the ground stolen from me and my family by the enemy.

And then pray for your heart to be healed of these things. I would suggest that you be quiet before the Lord following this. Ask the Lord if there is something else that you need to do to break the curse of the generations on you and on your family. The Lord has made provision for us to be set free. God bless you as you work through this and receive the freedom that Christ has for you.

<u>Post Script</u>: From time to time someone will ask me following this teaching, "Well, when you break curses in this way, does it work? I hardly know how to respond. I usually say that it is certainly not a magic incantation. I believe that it is a Biblical principle which when stated by faith is empowered by the Holy Spirit. Does it work to lead someone to faith in Christ? Does it work to pray for the sick? (I don't pose these questions to be argumentative). We do these things in obedience to scriptural principles.

I use this teaching regularly as a part of the ministry of breaking chains off people who are bound. We see many who are set free and who faithfully follow Jesus into more and more freedom.

Several years ago, I worked with a pastor in a church in the south of Mexico. He asked if I remembered him, and I told him he looked familiar. He said that I had prayed for him when he was a student at the Bible School near Mexico City some 6 years before. He said, Let me tell you what happened when you broke the curse of poverty over my family. He said that a transformation came about not only in his life but in the life of his father and mother, that for the first time in their lives they were out of debt and had even been able to purchase a home.

I was astounded. I thought, is it really possible that one little time of prayer could result in such amazing consequences in the life of a family? Yes, there are times when I have seen such results, but by no means every time. Breaking generational curses, along with all of the insights connected to inner healing and deliverance, is spiritual warfare. Victory does not usually come easily or automatically. In another

context, Jesus said to ask, seek, and knock (Greek scholars say these words are in the continuous imperative tense) and that is what we should do.

Endnotes

- (1) See <u>Healing the Wounded Spirit</u> by John and Paula Sandford.
- (2) Idolatry is placing anything before God in our scale of values. Some of its common manifestations are:
 - Physical idols or representations of "gods", men, animals
 - Mental idols–self, pornography, celebrities, athletes
 - Occultic practices
 - All religions that deny Jesus Christ
 - Love of money
 - Addictions such as alcohol, drugs, and sexual addictions
- (3) Exodus 20:5
- (4) Exodus 34:5
- (5) Romans 5:12
- (6) Ezekiel 18:20
- (7) Revelations 22:3
- (8) Isaiah 59:2
- (9) Psalms 31:10
- (10) Jeremiah 30:12-13
- (11) Ezekiel 9 and 18
- (12) Jeremiah 30:17
- (13) Exodus 20:46; Deut. 27:11-26; Exod. 33:24 ff
- (14) Galatians 3:13
- (15) Nehemiah 4:14