

BEARERS OF THE BLESSING AND THE CURSE

BIBLE STUDY ON DEUTERONOMY 11:13-32

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1. INTRODUCTION

We are assembled here in Canberra as a church at a critical time in the history of our country. We don't have to be prophets to know that our so-called lucky country has finally run out of luck. It seems almost as if a curse lies heavy on our land at present. Even the politicians in this city have come to admit that all is not right, in the state of Australia. Some have surmised that our decline in prosperity and the onset of ecological disorder may stem from something deeper than the mismanagement of the economy. Most, however, still act as if the economy were the be-all and end-all of everything. They reckon that our cleverness in creating new industries and producing new commodities will save us from bankruptcy and all our other troubles.

A few clear-sighted commentators have begun to consider whether our economic problems may be exacerbated by the increasing social disorder arising from the breakdown of marriages, families, and communities. Even fewer analysts have argued that our social disorder is the result of the moral vacuum in our society with its attendant social chaos and inordinate greed. But, to my knowledge, no public spokesperson has yet dared to break the deepest taboo in our society by asking whether much of this may stem from the apostasy of a whole generation, our generation, from the Christian faith. Such a query would indeed simply be ruled out of order. Religion has nothing to do with politics and economics. Worship has nothing to do with morality and culture. Faith in the Triune God has nothing to do with employment and sexuality and the environment. The nation is no better off in any material way for the presence of the Christian church in it. Rather, the church may indeed be a liability in dealing sensibly and economically with such pressing problems as the emancipation of women and the curtailment of AIDS.

I would like to challenge these prevailing assumptions by examining what Deuteronomy 11:13-32 has to say about the cause of both the blessing and the curse in the land of Israel.

2. THE SETTING OF DEUTERONOMY

If we are to recapture the sense of this passage, we need to envisage the setting of the whole book. Israel is poised to cross the Jordan and occupy the Promised Land. Moses, however, has been told that he will die before the people cross the Jordan. He therefore takes leave of them in a series of four farewell speeches that make up the body of the book. In these speeches he outlines the conditions attached by God to Israel's possession of the land. All this culminates in God's covenant with the Israelites on the Plains of Moab (Deut. 29:1). There are two sides to this covenant. On the one hand, God grants the land and his blessing to them in it. On the other hand, he legislates what is required of them for their possession of the land and the enjoyment of its blessings. The legislation indicates how the Israelites can retain their tenure of the land and maximize its blessings for the whole nation. The whole book of Deuteronomy then has to do with Israel's imminent entry into the Promised Land.

3. THE CONTEXT AND STRUCTURE OF 11:13-32

The body of Deuteronomy consists of four farewell speeches of Moses: his historical review of the journey from Sinai to the Plains of Moab in 1:1 - 4:43, the promulgation of the teaching (*torah*) for life in the land in 4:44 - 26:19, the promulgation of the blessing and the curse for the land in 27:1 - 29:1, and the promulgation of the land-grant covenant in 29:2 - 30:20.

Our pericope occupies a decisive position in the second speech of Moses. This speech falls into two main parts: the prologue to the legislation in 5:1 - 11:32, where Moses sets out his credentials as a divinely authorized legislator and emphasizes the priority of the first commandment, and the main body of the legislation in 12:1 - 26:15, where he uses the Decalogue to frame a constitution for Israel in the Promised Land. Deut 11:13-32 serves as the hinge between the two parts of this second speech. It gives the conclusion of the prologue and introduces what follows. In fact, as Craigie has shown, it is part of the framework for the legislation of Moses in Deuteronomy 12-26.

We have then the following framework for this legislation.

- a. Presentation of the blessing and the curse by Moses (11:26-28)
 - b. Promulgation of blessing and curse by Israel in the land (11:29-30)
 - c. The legislation of Moses for the land (11:31-26:19)
 - b. Promulgation of blessing and curse by Israel in the land (27:1-26)
- a. Presentation of the blessing and the curse of the covenant by Moses (28-30)

Thus the laws of Moses are set in a chiasmic pattern which demonstrates that the free flow of blessing from the Lord in the land is dependent on obedience to him in the land.

By itself, chapter 11 is a unified composition which deals with the relationship between obedience to God and the reception of blessing:

- a. The Reason for Obedience: 11:1-12
 - 1) The Call to Obedience (11:1-7)
 - a) Call to love God by obeying him (1)
 - b) Call to heed God's practical instruction of Israel in obedience (2)
 - by rescuing them from the Egyptians and destroying their army (3-4)
 - by caring for them in the desert and destroying the rebels Dathan and Abiram (5-6)
 - c) Their first-hand experience of this instruction (7).
 - 2) The Purpose of their Obedience (11:8-12)
 - a) Strength for occupation of the land the longevity in it (8-9)
 - b) Dependence of the land on rain from God (10-12)
- b. The Consequences of Obedience: 11:13-25
 - 1) Prosperity in the Land (13-17)
 - a) Agricultural prosperity as a result of obedience (13-15)
 - b) Warning against drought and famine as a result of apostasy (16-17)

- 2) Continuity of the Family in the Land (18-21)
 - a) Call for reliance on the words of Moses rather than on amulets for security in the land (18-20)
 - b) The success of the family from adherence to them (21)
- 3) Occupation of the Land (22-25)
 - a) Loving obedience as the condition for the occupation of the land (22)
 - b) Its consequences
 - The Lord's dispossession of all the nations in .it. through Israel (23-24)
 - The Lord's Intimidation of them through Israel (25)
 - c) The Promulgation of the Blessing and the Curse (11:26-32)
 - The Conveyance of the Blessing and the Curse by Moses to Israel
 - Their presentation for operation in the promised land (26)
 - Conditions for their respective operation (27-28)
 - Their Promulgation by Israel in the Land
 - Blessing on Mount Gerizim and curse on Mount Ebal (29)
 - The location of these mountains (30)
 - The performance of the statutory ordinances in the land (31-32)

In each of these sections the need for obedience is urged upon the Israelites: 11:1, 8, 13, 18, 22, 27-28, and the whole composition ends with a call to obedience in 11:32.

4. EXEGESIS AND MEDITATION: 11:13-32

a. The Consequences of Obedience (13-25)

1) Prosperity in the Land (13-17)

Now if you truly listen to my commandments which I command you today, by loving the Lord your God and by worshipping (Heb 'serving') him with all your heart and all your soul, then he (Heb 'I') will give the rain for your land at its season in autumn and in spring; you will harvest your grain and wine and olive oil. He (Heb 'I') will give grass in your paddocks for your livestock, so that you may eat (meat) and be satisfied. Watch out or else your heart will be enticed to turn away to worship (Heb 'serve') other gods and bow down to them. Then the Lord's anger will burn against you; he will shut up the heavens, so that there will be no rain and the land will not yield (Heb 'give') its produce, and you will soon be carried off from the good land which the Lord is giving you.

These words anticipate the period of settlement. They deal with the ultimate cause of economic prosperity in the land. Since God is not only the giver of the land but also the giver of the rain which nourishes the land, the secret of corporate prosperity lies in the love of the people for him. This love is demonstrated by their wholehearted service of him in their sacrificial worship. In this worship they not only present their sacrifices as their rent for the land but also acknowledge him as their Lord by bowing down before

him. Such faithfulness to the Lord in worship results in agricultural prosperity for the whole land. The Lord will not only provide their staple diet of bread, wine and olive oil, but also the luxury of meat for their sacrificial banquets at the three great religious festivals. God therefore promises them much more than their bare necessities. At least during their festivals they will live like kings and have all the meat that they can eat.

The alternative to this promising provision of the Lord for their prosperity in the land is the threat of disaster. If they reject the owner of the land and worship other gods, they will incur God's wrath. Their apostasy would lead to drought and famine and then, unless they came to their senses, ultimately to their eviction from the land and their extinction in an alien land.

The claims of Moses are quite explicit. Both the wholehearted worship of the Lord and the worship of other gods have far-reaching consequences; they affect the natural world and the economy of Israel. This may sound primitive and outdated to us, but it is the unanimous testimony of the whole Old Testament. To put the matter in our terms, the ultimate cause of our economic troubles is God's judgment on the apostasy of Christians from the worship of the Triune God; the immediate cause lies in our refusal as individuals and as a nation to obey the Decalogue that God-given recipe for an ecologically sound and sustainable way of life within the orders of creation here on planet earth.

2) Family Continuity in the Land: 11:18-21

Fix these words of mine upon your heart and your neck (Heb 'nepesh' = throat, appetite; breath, soul); bind them as symbols on your hand and wear them as pendants on your forehead (Heb 'between your eyes'). Teach them to your children by speaking them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the door-frames of your home and on your (town-) gates. Then you and your children will continue long in the land which the Lord promised to give to your ancestors, as long as the heavens are above the earth.

Like many modern people, ordinary folk in the ancient world wanted to be lucky; they believed in good luck and feared bad luck. They therefore made amulets and bought lucky charms; they wore these as jewelry on their neck and chest and head to protect these vulnerable parts of the body from evil; they put them as rings on their hands to make sure that they were successful in their work; they fixed them on gates of their towns and the entrances of their houses. These amulets had religious symbols and words inscribed on them and were therefore miniature idols. In fact, they often had the symbol or name of a particular deity engraved on them.

Such amulets were worn for three reasons in the ancient world first they indicated that the people wearing them were devoted to a particular god. Secondly, they were meant to ward off bad luck and protect the wearers against black magic that could unleash a curse upon them. Thirdly, they brought good luck and prosperity to him and his family. Amulets therefore made their wearers lucky and successful in their daily life.

In these verses Moses urges the Israelites to replace these magical and Idolatrous symbols with something far better and more powerful, God's word. He alludes here to the *Shema* in 6:4-5: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God; the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with an your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.' This was Israel's basic confession of faith. In it they acknowledged the Lord as their God and accepted his claim for their wholehearted exclusive devotion to him. God's name and the confession of it was powerful and 'lucky' for those who bore it; it evoked God's presence and secured his blessing; it confirmed faith in him and awakened love of him; it gave a person access to God in prayer and empowered him to keep his commandments; it created lasting security and protected against disaster; it alone ensured that a family would continue to remain on God's land and enjoy its benefits. God's name and his word - these are the source of life, strength and security for the people of God. Only as long as a family continued to adhere to the Lord and his word would they experience solidarity and continuity from generation to generation in the Promised Land.

The heads of the Israelite families are therefore urged to do three things with the name of their God and the words of their creed. First, they were to use them to make jewelry and to wear them as jewels on their head and their hands, their neck and their chest. They should also set them on their doorways and the entrances to their towns, so that all who came and went would notice them and realize that these places belong to the Lord.

Second, each adult should memorise and meditate on these words, it would not do just to use God's name and his word as an amulet and to fix them like a lucky charm on the neck and the chest, they had to be fixed in the heart and spoken with the breath from their throats, for only if they were assimilated into the very core of a person's being and spoken out aloud would they exercise their power on that person and his whole environment.

Third, each parent was told to teach them to their children. It is interesting to see how this occurs. The parents would, of course, explain who the Lord was and why they served him. But that was not their main way of teaching their children. Rather they were to teach their children by their own daily acts of devotion. When they went to bed in the evening and got up again in the morning. When they ate the meals and set out for work on their farms, they were to invoke the Lord by name, confess their faith in him, remember his word to them, and pray to him. They were therefore called to teach God's word to their children by using it to mark the most important points of their daily routine as a family

Note the sequence of events in these verses. God's word must first become incarnate in the hearts of his people. They could then teach it powerfully to their children, since what they said was illustrated and explained by their behaviour. Once they had assimilated it for

themselves and had taught it to their children. God's word should be fixed on the doors of their houses and the gates of their villages, since through them it exercised its power on these places. Once God's word was allowed to shape the life of the family and the whole of its workaday environment, it would create solidarity and ensure the continuity of the family in perpetuity on its ancestral estate. The ongoing existence of the family then depended on its devotion to the Lord and his word.

Like the Israelites we are called to use God's word devotionally in our homes. In this way our homes are dedicated to the Lord and so become springs of blessing for us and our society. Through personal meditation and family prayer, God's word exercises its power for good in ourselves and our families, our homes and our environment. All this is an important, if somewhat neglected, part of our Lutheran tradition. In fact Dr Luther used these very verses to justify his Small Catechism which was to be used for meditation, for family devotion, and for the instruction of children by parents. Could it be that the breakdown of many families in our congregations and the apostasy of many young people from the Christian faith may stem, in some measure, from the absence, of God's word in our hearts and our homes? It may be a cliché, but the family that prays together does indeed stay together.

3) The Occupation of the Land: 22-25

Indeed, if you diligently keep this commandment which I command you to observe, by loving the Lord your God, walking in his ways and clinging to him, the Lord will dispossess all these nations before you, so that you will take possession of nations larger and stronger than you. Every place where you set your foot will be your territory: from the desert to Lebanon, and from the River Euphrates to the Mediterranean Sea. No one will be able to withstand you; as he has promised you, the Lord your God will put the fear and dread of you on the face of the whole land where you will set foot.

Attention now turns to 'the commandment of Moses', the statutory ordinances which Moses is about to promulgate in Deut 12-26 as Israel's constitution for life in the Promised Land. This legislation is derived from the first commandment whose content is summed up by the requirement to love God. This love is explained with two figures of speech. Israel shall behave like a married man who clings to his wife and desires to be with her; just as the devotees of a pagan god used to follow the idol of their god in processions at their festivals, so God's people shall follow him in their worship and daily life.

The observance of the laws based on the first commandment would result in their occupation of the land. They would not have to fight to gain possession of it; God himself would vacate the land for them; the land would be theirs for the taking. God would not only allow them to take over the land without fighting its former occupants but would also intimidate their enemies, so that they would be safe in the land (cf 2:25). Their national security therefore depended on their observance of God's laws rather than on the strength of their armies and their armament.

If all this is true, then surely the defense of our country and its way of life

depends more on its moral health and the faithfulness of the Church in praying for its security than on its armed forces and up-to-date weaponry.

b) The Promulgation of the Blessing and the Curse: 26-32

*See **I hereby set** (Heb 'give') **before you today** a blessing and a curse - the blessing if you listen to the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you **today**; the curse if you do not listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn from the way that I command you **today**, by following other gods whom you have not known. Then when the Lord brings you into the land which you are about to enter and occupy, you shall **set** (Heb 'give') the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. These mountains are on the other side of the Jordan, beyond the road to the west, in the land of the Canaanites living in Arabah, close to Gilgal near the oak of Moreh. When you cross the Jordan to enter and occupy the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and when you have occupied and settled in it, be careful to observe all the statutory ordinances which **I set** (Heb 'give') **before you today**.*

We have here a carefully crafted literary unit which is introduced and rounded off by the same clause: 'I set before you today'. It is couched in the language of a legal enactment. The offer and demands of Moses employ the legal form used for the transfer of a person or some property from the possession of one person to another, such as occurs in an act of conveyance in our legal system (see Deut. 1:8, 21; 2:24, 31; 4:8; 30:15; Josh. 6:2-5; 8:1^b-3; 23:4-8 for similar enactments).

This legal enactment has the following parts to it.

1) The Terms of Conveyance

- The formula of conveyance which determines who conveys what to whom, and when (11:26; cf 1:8, 21^a; 3:24b, 31a; 4:5; 30:15)
- The conditions of conveyance (11:27-28; cf 30:16-18)

2) The Use of the Conveyed Property

- Its proper use (11:29b; cf 1:8b, 21^b; 2:24^c, 31^b; 4:6-8; 30:19^b)
- The time for the beginning of its use (11:29a)
- Its location (11:30)

In 11:26-30 Moses undertakes a legal transaction. In it he conveys the blessing and the curse from the Lord to the people of Israel for their operation and use in the Promised Land.

Blessing and curse are not autonomous or occult powers, but they derive from the Lord and are therefore subject to his disposal. While blessing produces life and prosperity (Heb 'goodness') for those who are granted it, the curse leads to disaster (Heb 'evil') and death for those who incur God's wrath (30:15, 19). Blessing is the divinely given power for fertility in animals and human beings, for prosperity in agriculture and animal husbandry, for nourishment from food and health of body and mind, for fulfillment in marriage and stability in the family for success in work and in business, for personal vitality and longevity, for enrichment and freedom, for safety from disaster and victory in battle, for personal achievement and social recognition (28:1-14). The curse, however, is the negation

of all these. It leads to sterility and drought, failure and frustration, marital disorder and family trouble, malnutrition and sickness, loss of status, indebtedness, poverty and slavery, disaster and defeat, loss of vitality and a premature death (28:15-68).

It is remarkable that these powers for good and ill are not taken to originate in the land and the ancestral spirits of its former owners, as in paganism, but they are said to come from the Lord who conveys them to the land via his people. It is even more remarkable that the Lord puts these powers at the disposal of its people. They will determine whether there is a blessing or a curse on the land, and that collectively by their obedience. They then enter the land as the bearers of both a blessing and curse. The land will be either better off or worse off by their presence in it.

The Canaanites believed that they could evoke a blessing or curse on the land by two methods. On the one hand, by offering blood or other food to the spirits of the dead they aimed appease them and secure blessing for themselves. On the other hand, they employed magic to create good luck for themselves and sorcery to call down disaster on their foes. But that was not how things stood with the Israelites. Whether God's blessing or his curse rested on the land depended on their obedience or disobedience to him. As long as they were faithful to him in their worship and obeyed his commandments, they would be blessed and would act as channels of divine blessing to the land and its under-privileged citizens. But if they worshipped other gods and disobeyed his commandments, they would be cursed and the land with them, until they themselves were removed from the land (29:24-28). Their disobedience would wreak ecological havoc to the land. It would become a sick and sorry sight, 'a burning waste of salt and sulphur - nothing planted, nothing sprouting, no vegetation growing in it' (29:22-23).

The Israelites were also instructed by Moses to set the blessing and the curse on the two mountains at Shechem as soon as they entered the land. The details of this ceremony are rather uncertain but it seems that it was to occur in two stages. The first part is described in 27:11-13:

On that day Moses commanded the people: "When you cross the Jordan these shall stand to bless the people in the direction of Mount Gerizim: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin, while these shall stand against the curse on Mount Ebal: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali."

Then after the Levites had declared twelve categories of evil doers accursed, the people were to affirm the curses with their 'Amen'. Thus as soon as the people had crossed the Jordan they were to set the blessing on the land. The people were divided into two groups for this enactment at Gilgal. In anticipation of what would later happen at Shechem, one half stood facing Mount Gerizim and mediated the blessing from it to the people, while the other half stood facing Mount Ebal and acted as a buffer against the curse from it.

The second stage is described in Deuteronomy 27:1-8 and Joshua 8:30-35. When the Israelites reached Shechem, situated in the valley between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, with its famous oak tree and the sanctuary, Joshua wrote the words of the law on the stones there, built an altar on Mount Ebal, offered sacrifices there, and read the blessings and the curses from Deuteronomy 28 to the assembled people, half of whom stood before Mount Gerizim and half before Mount Ebal. Oddly enough, the curse was located on Mount Ebal where sacrifices were offered on the altar there to atone for the sins of the people who had originally unleashed the curse.

Two things are significant about the placement of the blessing and the curse on

these mountains. First, the people enter the land as bearers of God's blessing. At the same time they not only bring the curse into the land but are also called to bear the curse that comes from disobedience to the Lord. They therefore cannot ascribe either the blessing or the curse to the land and its former inhabitants. Secondly, the blessing is meant for the whole land, just as they are meant to bear the curse for the whole land. This is symbolised by the placement of the blessing and the curse on the mountains at Shechem. This location is most significant. Shechem was the first place where Abram built an altar in the Promised Land, after the Lord had appeared to that man of blessing there (Gen 12:6-7). It was also the first place where Jacob built an altar after his return to the Promised Land (Gen. 33:20). So then, like these forefathers, the Israelites brought God's blessing with them to the geographical and spiritual centre of the land at Shechem. From there it was supposed to radiate out over the whole land.

In our text the Israelites are granted something new for their life in the land. In it Moses promulgates the blessing and the curse for them. This promulgation occurs in two stages. First, Moses places these powers at their disposal through his instruction of them. From that day on the blessing and the curse operated in Israel as he had determined. Secondly, Moses commands the Israelites to set these powers on the land as soon as they entered it. From that day on the blessing and the curse of the covenant were at work in the land through the presence of Israel in it. The words of our text are therefore a performative enactment by which the Israelites were appointed as the bearers of the blessing and the curse and commissioned to convey it to the land.

Our pericope ends with the command of Moses for the people to enact the legislation of chapters 12-26, as soon as they settled in the land. Moses presented the blessing and the laws to the people in the covenant that he made with them on the Plains of Moab. They, in turn, were to set that blessing on the land and obey these laws in the land, so that the whole land would reap the full harvest of that blessing. Through their faithfulness to the Lord and their obedience of this legislation they would continue to receive God's blessing and distribute it to all the inhabitants of the land. The mission of Israel was therefore to maximize the blessing and minimize the curse in the land,

Some Concluding Remarks

- a. In itself Australia is not a lucky country. All its 'luck' comes from God. Even before European settlement here, the animals and the people in the land were sustained and increased by the divine word of blessing spoken in creation (Gen.1:22, 28). It may not be a land flowing with milk and honey, but it is a good land, God's land.

We Christians have come to it as bearers of divine blessing for the land and its people. We have brought with us access to the Triune God and his grace through the proclamation and enactment of the gospel in the divine service. From him we have received much blessing for the land and its people. Our faithfulness in worship and obedience to God's law has brought a measure of prosperity to this country. The life-giving word of God which has been proclaimed in many churches and become enfleshed in the lives of many faithful people, has irrigated this land with the water of life. The benedictions spoken in countless services of worship have indeed wrought much good in our society over many years. The prayers of the faithful for the government, institutions, and people of this land have done much more for the common good of Australia than we could ever conceive. Yes, whether our secular pundits care to admit it or not, the church has brought much blessing on this land. The worship of the Triune

God has indeed had a decisive social, economic, and political impact on our history.

- b. The coming of the Church to this land has been a cause of darkness as well as light. Its blessings have proved to be mixed indeed. Australia is in some ways much the worse for the settlement of Christians in it, for we have also brought with us the curse of apostasy. Now it is true that the curse of the original fall lay heavy on this land long before white settlement. But we have added to it. The rejection of the Christian faith has brought in its wake social anomie, moral cynicism, personal dissatisfaction, and cosmic pessimism which seem to arise from a vague, general, unfocused sense of guilt and shame. Those who once knew the Triune God but have deliberately rejected him bear a heavy load of guilt for their contempt of God's grace and their desecration of his holiness. Their rebellion against God not only disfigures their souls but also blights the whole land with a curse.

Yet we who bear the name of Christ and still worship the Triune God cannot dissociate ourselves from this disaster. As bearers of God's blessing we are also appointed to stand between the curse and its victims. We are not to repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but rather bless those who abuse us (1 Pet 3:9). We who are called to bless others are also commissioned to intercede with the Triune God to pardon those who have sinned. Since Christ has borne the curse of divine condemnation for us, we can step in the breach for them and shield them from the curse which threatens to engulf them. Like our Lord who steps in our shoes to pray: 'Father, forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us', we can act as if the sins of others are our own sins and plead for their pardon as if it were for ourselves. As bearers of the blessing we can therefore also withstand and avert the curse from others.

- c. More than any other time in our history as a church we, I believe are called to do two things as we approach the end of this millenium. First, we are called to meditate on and assimilate God's life-giving, Spirit-filled word, so that, as it and its blessings become incarnate in us, we will teach it unambiguously to our children and have it shape our physical and cultural environment. Secondly, we are called to pray for our country with its government, institutions and people. As St. Paul reminds us in 1 Tim 2:1, such intercessory prayer is our main task in corporate worship in response to Christ's service of us as our mediator. In our petitions we are to treat the needs of others as our own needs; in our thanksgiving we are to regard the blessings enjoyed by the citizens of our land as our own blessings; in our intercessions we are to plead with God to pardon the sins of others as if we ourselves had committed them. In a country where greedy individualism feeds parasitically on the body politic like a consuming cancer in the human body, we are called to live vicariously and to act corporately. Our worship is for the benefit of the whole land.
- d. We have then come to Canberra not to confront our nation with the stark choice between the blessing and the curse, but to be confronted by it for ourselves. Both the blessing and curse are set before us. We can either act as the channels for the flow of divine blessing through us to our land or else short-circuit its flow by keeping it to ourselves. The blessing and the curse are in our hands. We can take God's blessing for ourselves and offer his curse to our nation, or else we can take God's curse on ourselves and offer his blessing to it. The flow of blessing comes through us and our faithfulness to God, the giver of all blessing.