

Heritage Part 2

Today, may we again give consideration to these scripture verses that are dedicated expressly to the genealogical bloodline of our Lord Jesus. And I'd like to repeat some of the things that we have said in an earlier message on this text, reminding us that although this listing of people's names might seem repetitive and mundane, it is so very meaningful and purposeful. As Psalm 19 tells us, "Making wise the simple".

Folks, God's Words in this bible are few and He does not waste any of them. And because of that, you and I must be very diligent in our attention to all of them, searching out the precious truths that God has for us in them.

Here, in these words that I'll read in a moment, we'll clearly see the genealogical heritage that led to the birth of the Lord Jesus. And the question that we have been asking is, "Do behaviors and the attributes of one generation influence and impact those next generations that follow along after them"? And we have used some of the words of the Ten Commandments found in Exodus 20:5-6 as a beginning point of reference. Those words . . .

For I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. (Exodus 20:5-6)

And yes, in our earlier message, we observed that in many ordinary ways, former generations do have an impact on future generations. And those impacts are most obvious in the temporal matters of life and can easily be seen as it relates to living standards, how when family members live in either extreme wealth or extreme poverty conditions, they pass along those lifestyles and habits to the next generation of children. And also, how physical maladies and personality types are obvious from generation to generation. All of which can result in what we call "generational blessings" and "generational curses".

But with that being said, these scriptures are also telling us about an altogether different form of heritage that is passed along from generation to generation, a heritage that can manifest itself in spiritual ways, "spiritual blessings" and "spiritual curses".

Today, as we again study these words of scripture given here in chapter 3 of Luke, we see all of the generations from Adam to the generation of the birth of the Lord Jesus. And to remind us, we have noted that although these words are

similar in some ways to the genealogy given in the Book of Matthew, which traces the genealogy back through the bloodlines of Joseph, these names are somewhat different in that they are the genealogy that traces the heritage of Jesus back through the bloodlines of His mother, Mary. Listen to these words again, beginning in verse 23 of Luke chapter 3.

²³ Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli, ²⁴ the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Janna, the son of Joseph, ²⁵ the son of Mattathiah, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, ²⁶ the son of Maath, the son of Mattathiah, the son of Semei, the son of Joseph, the son of Judah, ²⁷ the son of Joannas, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, ²⁸ the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmodam, the son of Er, ²⁹ the son of Jose, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, ³⁰ the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonan, the son of Eliakim, ³¹ the son of Melea, the son of Menan, the son of Mattathah, the son of Nathan, the son of David, ³² the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon, ³³ the son of Amminadab, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, ³⁴ the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, ³⁵ the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, ³⁶ the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, ³⁷ the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalalel, the son of Cainan, ³⁸ the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God. (Luke 3:23-38)

Again, may I remind us that within these words and within other scriptures like them, we are considering the impact that “heritage” can and does have upon the lives of future generations, heritage being defined as “those things within us that get passed along to our children and to our children’s children.”

And as we carefully examine those words that we gave a few moments ago from Exodus 20, we can conclude that, yes, it is a part of God’s design and plan that we do in fact, pass along much of who we are to not only our children, but also even to our children’s children. Those words again . . .

For I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who

hate me, ⁶ but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. (Exodus 20:5-6)

And then further, that those things we pass along are not limited to just some of our health-related issues, but that we also pass along our behaviors, our beliefs, our philosophies, and yes, even our blessings and our curses.

Consider again the impact of this truth that I have just read for us. It should be an astounding revelation to us to suddenly realize that all that we are right now, and all that we do every day, will be carried forward on into and will become a part of the lives of those who are born to us, our children and our children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.

As we have said, "we really are not an island unto ourselves". The path we choose to walk this day, whether it be good or it be evil, the actions, the behaviors, the beliefs, and the philosophies that we hold to and follow today can surely reach on forward into the next generation and can seriously affect and influence those innocent ones that are yet to be born.

In today's manner of understanding, we can say that yes, those actions, those behaviors, those beliefs, those philosophies that we accept into our character today, can put an indelible imprint onto our DNA, carrying both blessings and curses forward into the lives of our children, to the third and fourth generation.

Many people, perhaps most people, do not really believe that such consequences are taking place. And because they don't believe it, they simply ignore their responsibility. They go about their daily lives as if their individual behavior is simply their own business and it affects no one else but them.

But folks, on the authority of this word, we now know the real truth. And because you and I have now heard this truth, we are forever held accountable to it.

Our hearts should be asking questions, similar to the question asked of John the Baptist just a few verses earlier here in Luke chapter 3. The question, "What then must we do?" And the answer certainly will begin with these words in Deuteronomy 5:10 where God said, "I will show mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."

We need to humbly turn our hearts to the Lord, love Him and keep His commandments. We need to move on past the threadbare fragments of our

salvation, on into a complete surrender of our heart, soul, mind and strength. And we need to become obedient to His word.

In Deuteronomy chapter 6, God gave us very clear and straightforward words of instruction on the matter. He said,

⁵You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

⁶“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.

⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

(Deuteronomy 6:5-9)

Folks, found within these few words is, in many ways, the whole truth of God. If we will love Him and if we will teach His commandments and His precepts to our families, then we and our families will be blessed, and we will pass along a Godly heritage to all those generations that lie ahead of us.

And we can clearly see in our scripture text how this special truth was borne out in real lives. This lineage of Jesus, given to us here in Luke chapter 3 has story after story of men and whole families that thrived and were blessed, simply because they chose to join with the Lord in His righteous ways.

And I want us to spend these last few minutes today, looking through these names in Jesus' lineage and seeing the way that men and women, who agreed to allow God to “set them apart” for His purposes, were able to then do things, walk paths, accomplish great feats, far beyond their own personal abilities, and then, to pass something very special along to the next generation. Men and women, who, after they agreed to surrender themselves to the plans and purposes of God, became mighty men and women of the faith, great leaders and warriors for the family of God.

And because we are able to see so many generations, we can see where their blessings clearly showed up in the lives of their children and their children's children.

And as we read through these names, notice that several of these men that are in the lineage of Christ are also the same men that are honored in God's great

“Hall of Fame” of faith given in Hebrews chapter 11, “giants of the faith”, men and women set apart for God’s purposes, men like Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Turn with me to Hebrews chapter 11, and let’s look at that list of “heroes of the faith”, each of them valiantly stepping forward into the unseen realms of dependence upon God.

. . . One of the first names that we read there in Hebrews 11 and is also in the lineage of the Lord Jesus, is Enoch. We aren’t really told much about Enoch, except simply that he “walked with God; and he was no more, for God took him.” Listen!

⁵By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, “*and was not found, because God had taken him*”; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. (Hebrews 11:5)

How did Enoch “please” God? The next verse, verse 6, explains it.

⁶. . . without faith *it is impossible to please Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6)

Enoch pleased God with his great faith and God rewarded him by simply taking him up into paradise. Isn’t that a wonderful reward?

These words are a testimony and also a precept for us to follow. It is through deep abiding faith that we please God.

And note also some of these other “giants of the faith”, who were in the lineage of Christ, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, men who carried the mantle of God into everything that they did and every place they traveled. Yes, at times, each of them would stumble, but God was always faithful to uphold them in their times of temptation and continued to bless them, generation after generation!

. . . We note here also what might seem to be a strange addition to this “Hall of fame of faith”, a name that is also in the direct lineage of Jesus, the name Rahab.

You will recall that Rahab is referred to as having been, a “harlot”. And she was. But obviously, at some time in her life, she changed, and in her change, she gained great faith in God. And she put her faith into her actions and behavior.

And at the risk of her own life, she protected the Israelite soldiers who came to spy out the city of Jericho. And for her great faith, Rahab is given full mention here in God's "Hall of Fame" of faith.

But Rahab's story does not end there. Her righteous behavior and faith got passed on to the next generation, through the life of her son. Rahab married Salmon and together they begat a very righteous son, Boaz, a man here mentioned prominently within the lineage of Jesus.

And Boaz's story is a very encouraging and uplifting story of a Godly and trustworthy man. He was ordinary, much like you and me, living the ordinary circumstances of life, as a community man and farmer, when one day he was confronted with the opportunity to take advantage of an innocent woman, Ruth. But Boaz didn't do that.

The woman, Ruth, was a Godly woman, who had chosen to sacrifice her own needs to the needs of her mother-in-law Naomi by caring for Naomi and supporting her. And Boaz, seeing Ruth's beauty, her countenance and her character, desired for her to become his wife. And while Boaz had easy opportunity to take advantage of Ruth, he chose instead a path of righteous faith and acted in an honorable way towards her and obtained her hand in marriage in the proper way . . . Godliness and faith, passed along from his mother, working its way out in the matters of his daily life.

. . . And there are so many other of these same kinds of stories in the lives of these people in the lineage of Jesus, certainly King David and others, "giants of the faith", living out the Godly heritage passed along to them from their Godly parents.

And again, though at times, each of these "giants of the faith" did stumble in their obedience, as they repented and turned back to God, God was faithful and just to forgive them for their sins and to cleanse them from their unrighteousness. Praise be to God!

A question might be asked, "But did the Godliness of all of these great men and women of faith actually contribute to the Godliness of Jesus. We can't make that specific assertion about Jesus, because Jesus came into this life absolutely holy and righteous in His own character.

But with that being said, I would certainly believe that God prepared the hearts and minds of the parents and grandparents of Mary so that she would be the Godliest of mothers to the Lord Jesus.

And I have no doubt that that long line of Godly people was greatly blessed, generation after generation because of the Godliness passed on to them from previous generations.

With all of this being said about the many blessings that come to succeeding generations from the faithfulness of their forefathers, we must also consider the negative effects passed along through “ungodly” parents and grandparents. The scripture verses that we considered at the beginning of this message are very true. Listen again to those words found in Exodus 20:5-6 . . .

For I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. (Exodus 20:5-6)

In these words, God is clearly giving the warning that the heart attitudes and behaviors of one generation can have both bad and good effects on the children and the children’s children of those parents and grandparents.

But we also have other scriptures that give a different perspective on these matters. In reading Ezekiel chapter 18, we also find these words . . .

²⁰ The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. (Ezekiel 18:20)

As I mentioned in an earlier message, for me, this whole matter is one of the most mysterious and sometimes confusing concepts within these scriptures. There really is an obvious impact that past generations of family members have upon future generations of their family members.

And this is one of those really good examples of why we should never “cherry pick” verses of scripture that we like, and then use them in all situations.

In those words that we read from Exodus 20, and in several other passages, it would seem as if God will hold children and grandchildren accountable for sins they did not commit, sins that were the sins of their fathers and grandfathers.

But then, in other scripture passages, such as this one in Ezekiel, we are told clearly that each person is held accountable only for their own sins.

And again, this is not a contradiction. May I assure us in the strongest of terms that these scriptures have no contradictions within them. If we will be careful to do as 2 Timothy tells us and

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

We will find that yes, one generation can and does, by their character and behavior, influence the character and behavior of the next generation. But those future generations are still ever and always able to do as those words in Exodus 20 tell us. They can turn from the ways they learned from their fathers and, by faith, be saved from the sins they commit.

May I close with this thought? Though you and I may not be able to fathom all the mysteries of God, and especially this one about how one generation affects the next generation, we do know that if we will give our hearts to Christ, He will save us and change us into the people He wants us to be.

And then from there, if we'll simply follow the instructions given to us in Deuteronomy 6, both our lives and the lives of our children will be safe in God's eternal care. Listen to these words again as we close.

⁵You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

⁶And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.

⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.
(Deuteronomy 6:5-9)

And then from Hebrews chapter 11, verse 6,

⁶ . . . without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6)

May we pray!

