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Strongholds

V

Generational Curses

STRONGHOLDS v GENERATIONAL CURSES

In Scripture, a curse was a solemn declaration of God's judgment, carrying real consequences because it was rooted in God's justice. A Biblical curse involved:

a) a response to sin: disobedience brought covenant consequences *(e.g. Deut 28).*
b) a withdrawal of blessing: God removed His protective favour, allowing hardship to follow *(e.g. Israel's exile for persistent rebellion).*
c) a disruption of relationship: curses highlighted the seriousness of breaking covenant with God *(e.g. in Genesis 3, God cursed the serpent and the ground because of human rebellion, introducing toil, pain, and death into the world).*

Thus, a Biblical curse was a divine judgment tied to covenant breaking - a formal pronouncement of misfortune resulting from sin. Under the Old Covenant, this was built into the covenant structure: obedience brought blessing, rebellion brought covenant curses *(Deut 28).* However, this framework changes significantly in the New Testament.

The New Testament teaches that Christ redeemed Believers from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for them *(Gal 3:13).* This means:

i. God does not curse His children and treat them as covenant enemies.
ii. The curse of the law has been fully absorbed by Christ and His atoning work on the Cross was all-sufficient and acceptable in God's eyes.
iii. Believers stand in grace, not under divine judgment.

Though God does not curse those He has forgiven, justified, and adopted as children, He does still respond to a Believer's rebellion. His response, however, is discipline, not cursing.

Scripture distinguishes between ***Old Testament cursing*** as judicial wrath and covenant judgment, and ***New Testament discipline*** which is loving correction for God's children.

Whether God allows the natural consequences of our sin to reach us, whether we experience a loss of peace or joy, relational strain, the weight of conviction, or some other form of adversity, these experiences function as God's Fatherly discipline. They are restorative in purpose, not punitive. God does not curse His children. Christ has already borne the curse, and God does not require it twice.

In light of this, we should be cautious when using the phrase 'generational curse' to describe recurring patterns such as alcoholism, addiction, relational breakdown, violence, or persistent hardships within a family line. These cyclic patterns may be serious and deeply rooted, but they are not divine curses placed on Believers. The New Testament does not teach generational curses for those in Christ. What people often label as a 'generational curse' is more accurately understood to be a family pattern of behaviour, a stronghold, the consequences of generational sin or an environmental influence.

Although well-meaning Christians sometimes describe repeated generational patterns of sin as a demonic inheritance, or divine punishment passed down because of the sins of previous generations, this does not reflect what Scripture teaches about Believers. These repeated behaviours are not divine judgments placed on God's children, but rather the ripple effects of repeated choices.

Generational inclinations, repeated behaviours, strongholds and consequences of previous generational sin certainly exist. Behaviour shapes behaviour, upbringing forms mindset, and children frequently imitate the choices they observe in their parents. For example, in the lives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob the repeated pattern of deception was evident *(Gen 12:13, 20:2, 26:7, 27:18-36, 37:31-33).* Yet these are generational patterns, not generational curses. Generational patterns arise from repeated decisions, learned habits, and consequences of inherited environments, not from a spiritual curse or demonic transmission. As Galatians 6:7 explains, we reap what we sow.

For this reason, we should avoid using the word *'curse'* for Believers. Biblically, a curse signifies God being against someone, and that is never true for those who are in Christ. A curse is not something God places on His children. Christ has set us free from the curse of the law, the penalty of sin, God's wrath and the dominion of darkness *(Gal 4:4-7, Eph 1:7, Rom 5:9, 8:1-2).* Believers have a new identity, have been adopted by God, and are now living under grace, not law, where we have been blessed with all spiritual blessings *(Col 1:12-13, Heb 9:12-15).*

The belief that Christians can be under generational curses usually comes from two sources:

1. Personal experience - people repeat family cycles and then look for a spiritual explanation and/or someone to blame. But experience should never over-rule the truth of Scripture.
2. Poor Biblical interpretation - certain Old Testament passages are misapplied to New Covenant Believers, leading some Christians to think Scripture supports generational curses on them.

Several Old Testament passages are commonly misinterpreted to teach that God curses later generations for the sins of their ancestors. In reality, each of these passages has a clear covenant, context, or condition that is often overlooked. What follows is a precise, theologically list of the main verses that are misread in this way, along with what they actually mean:

1. Exodus 20:5 *"visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me"*. People read *"visiting the iniquity"* as God automatically cursing descendants. What it actually means:

- The phrase applies only to those who continue in the same hatred and idolatry *("of those who hate Me").*
- It describes repeated generational choices, not inherited curses.
- It is part of the Mosaic covenant, not a universal rule for all time.

2. Exodus 34:7 *"visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children".* The wording sounds like automatic generational punishment. What it actually means:

- The phrase is idiomatic covenant language, not a literal statement about spiritual curses.
- It refers to patterns of sin, repeated choices, that continue unless repentance breaks the cycle.

When children continue the sins of their parents, they experience similar consequences, not because God curses them, but because they walk the same path *(Gal 6:7).*

- The same passage emphasises God's mercy, not generational doom.

3. Numbers 14:18 *"visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation"*. It appears to teach inherited guilt. What it actually means:
- This is spoken in the context of Israel's national rebellion.
- It describes national consequences, not personal curses.
- Children suffer when they repeat the sins of their parents, not because God curses them *(Gal 6:7).*

4. Deuteronomy 5:9 which is a restatement of Exodus 20:5. People assume repetition means universal application. What it actually means:
- It is tied to the Sinai covenant, not the New Covenant.
- It is conditional: *"of those who hate Me."*
- It does not apply to Believers redeemed in Christ.

5. Deuteronomy 28 *(Covenant Curses)*. Some assume the curses listed still apply to Christians today. What it actually means:
- These curses were specific to Israel under the Mosaic covenant.
- They were national covenant judgments, not generational curses on families.
- Galatians 3:13 explicitly states that Christ redeemed Believers from these curses.

6. Lamentations 5:7 *"Our fathers sinned, and we bear their iniquities."* It sounds like children are punished for their parents' sins. What it actually means:
- The people are lamenting the national consequences of generations of rebellion.
- This is descriptive, not doctrinal.
- It does not teach inherited guilt. Ezekiel 18 corrects this misunderstanding directly.

7. Jeremiah 31:29-30 *"The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."* Some think it affirms generational punishment. What it actually means:
- Jeremiah says this proverb will no longer apply under the New Covenant.
- Each person will be judged for their own sin, not their ancestors.
- This is a direct rejection of generational cursing theology.

8. Ezekiel 18:2-4, 20 is often ignored rather than misinterpreted. Ezekiel explicitly refutes the idea that God punishes children for their parents' sins:
- *"The soul who sins shall die."*
- *"The child will not bear the guilt of the parent."*

This is the clearest corrective to all misreadings of the earlier passages.

In summary, Christians often misunderstand the above verses because they:
- Ignore the covenant context *(Mosaic, not New Covenant).*
- Overlook the conditional language *("of those who hate Me").*
- Confuse consequences with curses.
- Assume national judgments apply to individual Believers.
- Miss the New Testament's clear teaching that Christ bore the curse and we reap what we sow.

Scripture never teaches that God places curses on Believers because of their ancestors' sins. If He did, then praying against such curses would mean resisting God's own Will, which is impossible.

Generational patterns of sinful desire, vulnerability, consequences, and/or strongholds may continue if not confronted but not curses. In a curse, God is against you. In sinful generational patterns, consequences and strongholds, God is for you, helping you fight.

Ezekiel 18:20 makes this explicit. Each person is accountable for their own sin. Children are not punished for their parents' wrongdoing, and parents are not punished for their children's. God deals with individuals based on their own choices.

Some Believers blame external forces such as demons or family history for their spiritual struggles, avoiding responsibility for their own decisions. But Scripture teaches that each person sins because they choose to sin.

A lack of prayer, holiness, worship, or devotion is not the result of a generational curse, it is the result of personal decisions. The sobering and hopeful truth is that God holds each person accountable and therefore each person is also free to walk in righteousness, regardless of their family background.

Though blaming curses is easier than confessing and repenting, that mindset is deceptive. While demonic powers do oppose Believers, Christians have been given authority over them. The decisive truth is that salvation itself breaks every curse. Galatians 3:13 declares that Christ took the curse of the law upon Himself when He died on the cross.

Freedom is already ours and the punishment for sin no longer applies to Believers. We simply need to walk in it. Every curse was broken at redemption. The only remaining influence a supposed generational curse can have is the power a Believer gives it through fear or belief in its authority.

Christians can make foolish choices, agree with lies of the enemy, walk in disobedience, grieve the Holy Spirit, and these choices will bring painful results, but this is not cursing themselves. It is sowing and reaping *(Gal 6:7).*

God's sovereignty also shapes how deliverance from sin is experienced. Some Believers are released from a particular addiction, fear, temptation or struggle immediately, while others continue to wrestle over time.

Many sincerely repent, seek God earnestly, and ask for the struggle to be removed, yet still find themselves contending with it. This ongoing battle does not indicate we are unsaved. We can be deeply committed to Christ and still wrestle. Nor does it indicate we are unloved and that God is against us. God stands with His people in their struggle, not against them. Deliverance is real, but it is not always instantaneous. And remember, temptation is not sin.

The reality that some are freed instantly while others continue to wrestle even after praying, repenting, seeking help, and walking faithfully echoes Paul's experience with the 'thorn in the flesh', a messenger of Satan that God did not remove *(2 Cor 12:7).*

Scripture does not specify what the thorn was, allowing Believers to see their own struggles reflected in Paul's words. God's response, *"My grace is sufficient for you,"* shows that at times God sustains rather than removes.

Deliverance is real and Biblical, but so is self-discipline and perseverance under pressure. Sometimes God leaves a struggle in place because self-control, boundaries, and spiritual maturity must also be developed in us. We must learn to take every thought captive and apply discipline *(1 Cor 9:27, 2 Cor 10:5).*

To conclude, we must remember that spiritual attack is a normal part of a Christian's life and that the Lord has given us strategies for dealing with the Enemy *(see: Spiritual Warfare & Deliverance Booklet).*

Though God can deliver us instantly from our sinful stronghold/s, sometimes He strengthens us through the struggle. His grace is always sufficient, and He is not only with us and for us in the fight, but the battle itself belongs to Him *(1 Sam 7:14).*
