

Audio Transcript of Sermon
February 15, 2025
Greatness and God's People

Hello. Thank you for joining us today. My name is Tom Laign with Sabbath Bible Study. What brings greatness to a nation and to the people of God? In the United States that has been debated politically and will likely continue to be debated for many years to come. The debate over greatness is not unique to the country I call home. Politicians around the world seek to make things better in the country they live in as well and seek to globally position their country, so it has a favorable place among the nations of our planet. These efforts do have a direct impact on the people. For instance, when a government adopts policies that cause inflation to increase, the people find they are able to buy less and less with their money. When a government adopts policies that make it easier for more people to pursue post-secondary education, more people tend to pursue post-secondary education. In my country the political debate is over making America great again, and in whatever country you live in, I'm sure there is some type of similar political debate.

Biblically, we can look to Israel as a nation that from the beginning had God's favor and blessing. The patriarch of Israel was a man named Abraham and in his home country before he left for the promised land, he was known as Abram. Why Abram was chosen and not somebody else is not something the Bible goes into great detail on. Was Abram one of many who would have easily worked for God's purposes, and God just chose Abram? Was it more random where God just happened to encounter Abram and because of that encounter decided to go with Abram? Jesus taught that God knows the hairs on our head and that tells me God knew more about Abram than what is given to us in the Bible. Abram would go on and be the father of Israel and by extension the father of the faithful. God might have seen faith and other important qualities in Abram, and the rest is history. He promised Abram that a great and blessed nation would descend from him and that through him all the families of the earth would be blessed. Genesis twelve verse one.

Genesis 12:1-3

1. Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

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2. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

3. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

It's easy for us looking backwards in time to understand all the connections. We can see the promise of the nation of Israel and the hope of eternal salvation through Jesus Christ in these few words, but looking forward, Abram wouldn't have had the same mental clarity. Through faith he accepted what God said and also did what God expected of him. Abram would be renamed as Abraham by God and eventually he died, but not before having his son Isaac. The promise given to Abraham would pass to Isaac and from Isaac to Jacob, and from Jacob to his sons who would be the fathers of the tribes of Israel. Egypt would become part of Israel's history and after four hundred thirty years, Israel would be freed from Egypt by God. Decades would be spent wandering in the wilderness before Israel took possession of the promised land. Time would pass after that through a series of judges before Israel demanded a king, and the first king didn't work out so well for Israel. God replaced him with David, a man after God's own heart, and when David died, Solomon took over as king. It was through Solomon that the temple was built. God told David that his hands were too bloodied to build the temple, and when Solomon reigned, the temple was built. There was a fantastic dedication ceremony with public prayer and fire even coming down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and sacrifices. It was then that the glory of God filled the temple. At this time in Solomon's reign, Israel was at its height of greatness and influence. The temple celebration would go on for eight days during what is known as the Feast of Tabernacles with the people going home on the twenty-third day of the seventh month. The tabernacle of God was with His people. After the celebrations and the Feast of Tabernacles, God came to Solomon in a dream and told him that, "if my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." God showed Solomon that greatness stems from being called by God, having humility, being prayerful, seeking God, and turning from evil, and by extension doing what is righteous. Second Chronicles seven verse one.

2 Chronicles 7:1-14

- 1. Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house.**
- 2. And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house.**
- 3. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth forever.**
- 4. Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the Lord.**
- 5. And king Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty and two thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep: so the king and all the people dedicated the house of God.**
- 6. And the priests waited on their offices: the Levites also with instruments of musick of the Lord, which David the king had made to praise the Lord, because his mercy endureth forever, when David praised by their ministry; and the priests sounded trumpets before them, and all Israel stood.**
- 7. Moreover Solomon hallowed the middle of the court that was before the house of the Lord: for there he offered burnt offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings, because the brasen altar which Solomon had made was not able to receive the burnt offerings, and the meat offerings, and the fat.**
- 8. Also at the same time Solomon kept the feast seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt.**
- 9. And in the eighth day they made a solemn assembly: for they kept the dedication of the altar seven days, and the feast seven days.**
- 10. And on the three and twentieth day of the seventh month he sent the people away into their tents, glad and merry in heart for the goodness that the Lord had shewed unto David, and to Solomon, and to Israel his people.**
- 11. Thus Solomon finished the house of the Lord, and the king's house: and all that came into Solomon's heart to make in the house of the Lord, and in his own house, he prosperously effected.**
- 12. And the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice.**
- 13. If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people;**

14. If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

Having had this unique experience one would think Solomon who is thought of as a very wise person would always stay right with God, and yet the Bible tells us that Solomon liked women and had many foreign wives who turned his heart from God. Eventually that trickled down to the people, and the people who had been loved and saved by God thought less and less of God and thought more and more of the people from the nations around them. About three hundred years later the nation that had once been great had its last righteous ruler, Josiah of the Kingdom of Judah, and shortly after his death, Judah went into captivity.

Going into captivity just hundreds of years after the height of greatness should remind us of how easy it is to fall from greatness, and long before any of this happened, while Israel was still wandering in the wilderness, God gave the people of Israel a lesson in blessings and curses, and it should come as no surprise that blessings are linked to greatness, and curses are not linked to greatness. We will read that to obtain the blessings from God Israel had to do what God expected and that curses came from not doing what God expected.

The blessings and curses are given to us in Deuteronomy twenty-eight, and God first started with the blessings, what would happen for doing what God expected, followed by the curses for not doing what God expected. It's easy to see that more words are given to the curses than the blessings, more than three to one, and with that ratio, somebody might wonder how anyone, let alone the nation of Israel, could escape a curse from God, but it comes to the same standard of doing what God expects, and a good way to think of the chapter on blessings and curses is to think of it as a list of the good things that will come by doing what God expects and the bad things that would be avoided by doing what God expects.

It begins by God telling Israel to diligently listen to what God was saying. Diligently listening means more than just casual listening. For instance, when it is mid-evening and I am watching television for entertainment, I am casually listening and watching. If I am watching a breaking news story or a political speech, I am diligently listening. There is a difference for me because with casual listening and watching I tend to forget details pretty quickly, much like trying to remember

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what I had for lunch yesterday. Getting back to Deuteronomy, then a series of blessings are given for Israel to consider, how they would be blessed just about everywhere and in everything they did, and how they would become a leader among nations. Other nations would see the blessings bestowed upon them, take note, and know not to try and take advantage of Israel. Also given as examples of blessings are bountiful harvests, economic prosperity, and military dominance. Deuteronomy twenty-eight verse one.

Deuteronomy 28:1-68

- 1. And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:**
- 2. And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God.**
- 3. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field.**
- 4. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep.**
- 5. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store.**
- 6. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out.**
- 7. The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways.**
- 8. The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.**
- 9. The Lord shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in his ways.**
- 10. And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee.**
- 11. And the Lord shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers to give thee.**

12. The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow.

13. And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the Lord thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them:

14. And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand, or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

Then, God got into the curses that would come upon Israel for not doing what God expected. Some see these as the rantings of a cruel and merciless God and in our world of religious freedom they are welcomed to have their views as much as we are welcomed to have our views that God is very merciful and loving. What looks like a long list of curses is a list of four curses followed by a detailed description of what those curses would look like. The blessings are given to us in verses three through six and the curses are given in verse sixteen through nineteen. Four blessings are directly stated, and four curses are directly stated, and both blessings and curses are followed with detailed descriptions. God listed in detail what those curses would look like not because God is cruel and unmerciful, but because God is loving and merciful. God wanted Israel to know the bad that could come so that they could actively avoid it. The blessings don't go into so much detail, and it's not because there are fewer ways that God can bless people. With God there is no limit to His mercy and graciousness and when people do what God expects, there is no limit to how people will see and experience blessings in their life. Let's review the curses that God listed for Israel. Verse fifteen.

15. But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee:

16. Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field.

17. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store.

18. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep.

19. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out.

Then God went about giving detail to these curses. Pandemics, disease, war, and drought are just the beginning of what curses look like. Verse twenty.

20. The Lord shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me.

21. The Lord shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he have consumed thee from off the land, whither thou goest to possess it.

22. The Lord shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew; and they shall pursue thee until thou perish.

23. And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron.

24. The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed.

Continuing with what curses would look like included military defeats, specific life altering diseases, mental illness, not being able to find a path forward in life, lack of success, and infidelity in marriage. Verse twenty-five.

25. The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.

26. And thy carcase shall be meat unto all fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray them away.

27. The Lord will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed.

28. The Lord shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart:

29. And thou shalt grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways: and thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save thee.

30. Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her: thou shalt build an house, and thou shalt not dwell therein: thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof.

God showed how life stock would be destroyed with no benefit to the people, how families would be disrupted, and parents be powerless. What Israel would do would not benefit them but another nation, and the great nation of Israel would become the laughingstock of the world as people debated whether there really was a God of Israel. Verse thirty-one.

31. Thine ox shall be slain before thine eyes, and thou shalt not eat thereof: thine ass shall be violently taken away from before thy face, and shall not be restored to thee: thy sheep shall be given unto thine enemies, and thou shalt have none to rescue them.

32. Thy sons and thy daughters shall be given unto another people, and thine eyes shall look, and fail with longing for them all the day long: and there shall be no might in thine hand.

33. The fruit of thy land, and all thy labours, shall a nation which thou knowest not eat up; and thou shalt be only oppressed and crushed alway:

34. So that thou shalt be mad for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.

35. The Lord shall smite thee in the knees, and in the legs, with a sore botch that cannot be healed, from the sole of thy foot unto the top of thy head.

36. The Lord shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone.

37. And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee.

Harvest would be scarce with natural pests and plant diseases taking their toll on crops. Even their children would be taken from them. Foreigners would become more important and powerful than the people of Israel, and Israel would become a debtor nation not having a sovereign wealth fund that could lend to other nations. Verse thirty-eight.

38. Thou shalt carry much seed out into the field, and shalt gather but little in; for the locust shall consume it.

39. Thou shalt plant vineyards, and dress them, but shalt neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them.

40. Thou shalt have olive trees throughout all thy coasts, but thou shalt not anoint thyself with the oil; for thine olive shall cast his fruit.

41. Thou shalt beget sons and daughters, but thou shalt not enjoy them; for they shall go into captivity.

42. All thy trees and fruit of thy land shall the locust consume.

43. The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low.

44. He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him: he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail.

45. Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee:

46. And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed forever.

God made it clear to the people of Israel that if they weren't happy doing what God expected, they would most definitely do what their enemies wanted. Verse forty-seven.

47. Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things;

48. Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee.

God showed them that He could bring a nation from anywhere to subdue them, and that this nation would have no mercy on the people and would totally decimate their crops and livestock. The people would be left starving to the point they would eat their own children. People who were once the kindest among the people would become vicious, all out of the quest to satisfy hunger. Verse forty-nine.

- 49. The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand;**
- 50. A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor shew favour to the young:**
- 51. And he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee.**
- 52. And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which the Lord thy God hath given thee.**
- 53. And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the Lord thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee:**
- 54. So that the man that is tender among you, and very delicate, his eye shall be evil toward his brother, and toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the remnant of his children which he shall leave:**
- 55. So that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children whom he shall eat: because he hath nothing left him in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee in all thy gates.**
- 56. The tender and delicate woman among you, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter,**
- 57. And toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and toward her children which she shall bear: for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the siege and straitness, wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates.**

Beyond the curses of human enemies would come the curses of disease like has never been seen with illnesses touching all generations. Illnesses not previously seen in Israel would arise and destroy the people. In the end, many would die and only a few would remain. Those remaining would be scattered among other nations and live their lives there in fear, to the point that all that people would seek is the end of the day and sleep. God promised Israel that ultimately, they

would even see future enslavement in Egypt, the land that they had just left. Verse fifty-eight.

58. If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE Lord THY GOD;

59. Then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance.

60. Moreover he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid of; and they shall cleave unto thee.

61. Also every sickness, and every plague, which is not written in the book of this law, them will the Lord bring upon thee, until thou be destroyed.

62. And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude; because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the Lord thy God.

63. And it shall come to pass, that as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it.

64. And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone.

65. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind:

66. And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life:

67. In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.

68. And the Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you.

By doing what God expected not only would the people reap all the blessings, they would also avoid all the curses. Some read the chapter on blessings and

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curses and see a vengeful God and others read it and see God who is pleading with His people to do what is expected so blessings can be bestowed on them. What we read as blessings some would look at as just the result of incredible luck striking again and again in the same place when statistics would clue us to a different direction. Those who see the curses as only purposeful acts of God discount the probability of the randomness the human existence. Make no mistake, at any time God can bring a curse wherever a curse is warranted but God also has at His disposal natural consequences of human actions. Sometimes we come face-to-face with those natural consequences whether accidental or intentional in origin. Take for example the recent COVID-19 pandemic. There is debate whether or not its origin was accidental or intentional. The world suffered because of COVID-19. COVID-19 was like a curse. Comparing COVID-19 to the chapter on blessings and curses we could debate if God brought COVID-19 or if God simply allowed COVID-19 as a natural consequence, but the effect of its curse was widespread.

What is harder for us to see and understand is all the times when God intervened and prevented something from even happening. It's no fun to be in an auto accident, and whenever I have avoided an accident, I am always thankful for being spared. What I don't know is any intervention by God that I never knew about that prevented an auto accident. For instance, If I drive to go grocery shopping and have a safe drive to and from the store, I would never consider if God intervened to keep me from ending up in an accident, especially if there were no near misses. Blessings are sometimes like that. It's easy to accept as normal what is good in our life and overlook that behind what is good in our life are incredible blessings from God. As we start to overlook the incredible blessings in our life and in our nation and accept those all as normal is when curses can spring up. If we don't see what brings blessings to our life and nation, we will not see what brings curses to our life and nation.

The good news for Israel is that even when long ago they went into captivity, the future for Israel is much brighter. The modern nation of Israel is nothing compared to what Israel once was. Thousands of years ago there were distinct tribal lands within Israel, and today with the modern nation of Israel, only a small portion remains. The tribes of Israel were scattered and lost to history. Micah shows that Jerusalem will be the capital of the Kingdom of God, and at this future time, the Kingdom of God will be the most powerful nation. Today, nations have

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immigration issues, and in this future time, people will flow to the Kingdom of God. It will be like a river of people. It will be a time of peace when implements of war will become tools of productivity. War will be a thing of the past. Micah four verse one.

Micah 4:1-4

- 1. But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.**
- 2. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.**
- 3. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.**
- 4. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it.**

David, a man after God's own heart was not only a king, but he also understood that his greatness came from God. That is why David put his trust in God knowing that when others sought his destruction, God would protect him, even when it seemed like God had abandoned him. Psalm seventy-one verse one.

Psalm 71:1-24

- 1. In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion.**
- 2. Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me.**
- 3. Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress.**
- 4. Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man.**
- 5. For thou art my hope, O Lord God: thou art my trust from my youth.**
- 6. By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels: my praise shall be continually of thee.**
- 7. I am as a wonder unto many; but thou art my strong refuge.**

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- 8. Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honour all the day.**
- 9. Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth.**
- 10. For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together,**
- 11. Saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him.**
- 12. O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help.**

David knew those who sought him harm would receive reproach and dishonor through God, and David drew his strength from God. He knew God had protected him throughout his life and would protect him into old age. He knew his greatness came from God. Verse thirteen.

- 13. Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered with reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt.**
- 14. But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more.**
- 15. My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof.**
- 16. I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.**
- 17. O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.**
- 18. Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to everyone that is to come.**
- 19. Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee!**
- 20. Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.**
- 21. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.**
- 22. I will also praise thee with the psaltery, even thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing with the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel.**
- 23. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed.**
- 24. My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long: for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt.**

In Psalms we are told a nation is blessed when God is their God, and the people are God's people. God goes to great lengths to protect His people, and we wait knowing with God we have this great protection around us. Psalm thirty-three verse twelve.

Psalm 33:12-22

12. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.

13. The Lord looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men.

14. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth.

15. He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works.

16. There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength.

17. An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength.

18. Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy;

19. To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.

20. Our soul waiteth for the Lord: he is our help and our shield.

21. For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name.

22. Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.

In Proverbs we are told that righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach. When we do what is righteous is when our greatness increases, and just like a ruler shows favor to those who are wise and anger to those who cause shame, God bestows blessings on us for doing righteousness. Proverbs fourteen verse thirty-four.

Proverbs 14:34-35

34. Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.

35. The king's favour is toward a wise servant: but his wrath is against him that causeth shame.

For God's people, it is greatness as determined by God that is of importance to us. We need not to be like the rest of this world that seeks glory through other people. Instead of being like other people, we seek to be righteous. We seek first

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the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and through that process our mind is renewed becoming less and less like other people and becoming more and more like Christ. Romans twelve verse one.

Romans 12:1-8

- 1. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.**
- 2. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.**

Knowing we have this hope of eternal life and knowing that we have been called does not give us reason to think highly of ourselves. Instead, we have a sober understanding of where we are in the faith. We recognize that all who are of the household of faith have been given spiritual gifts and we are to use those spiritual gifts to their full measure. Greatness means we do not hold back spiritually. Verse three.

- 3. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.**
- 4. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:**
- 5. So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.**
- 6. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;**
- 7. Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;**
- 8. Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.**

Finally, greatness that is determined by God comes with the knowledge that all things work together for good to all who love God and who are called according to His purpose. Knowing all things will work together for good can only lead to greatness, and there is no other person or situation that can separate us from the

love of God and greatness that God intends for His people. Romans eight verse twenty-eight.

Romans 8:28-39

- 28. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.**
- 29. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.**
- 30. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.**
- 31. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?**
- 32. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?**
- 33. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.**
- 34. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.**
- 35. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?**
- 36. As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.**
- 37. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.**
- 38. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,**
- 39. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

When we think of what brings greatness to a nation and to the people of God, it is God Who brings greatness. That greatness comes from doing what God expects of us, so blessing is heaped upon blessing. To reap those blessings and the greatness that stems from those blessings, we must diligently do what God expects of us.

Thank you for joining us today. God-willing we'll get together next time on the Sabbath. Until then, thank you for joining us today.