

Blessing and Curse: Renewal at Moab

Moses, knowing that he will not be going over the Jordan into the Promised Land, remains a faithful servant of the Lord and begins to prepare the tribes of Israel for their journey into the land flowing with milk and honey. The people of Israel who had first made a covenant with Yahweh at Mount Sinai have now all passed away, except for Joshua and Caleb—the two scouts who had traversed the land and exhorted the people of Israel to trust in the Lord, knowing that their God would give them the land.

The Israelites are now gathered in the land of Moab, and Moses, as their spiritual leader, must reiterate the covenant that their forefathers made with Yahweh at Mount Sinai. To fully understand their position before God, it is important for the Israelites to remember what Yahweh has already done on their behalf.

Israel is no longer in slavery to Egypt and Pharaoh. God has worked great wonders and miracles to free His people from cruel bondage and is guiding them to a land where they can thrive. Then Moses gives the people an ominous message: “But to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear.” (Deuteronomy 29:4) Perhaps Moses is warning this new generation that they could end up like their ancestors.

Can we, as believers indwelt by the Holy Spirit, affirm that we are listening to the Word of God, seeing the light of Christ in those around us, and allowing the Spirit to continue softening our hearts of stone?

Moses goes on to remind the tribes how the Lord fed and watered them in the wilderness, kept them clothed, and protected them from harm. Not only had their safety been preserved, but some of the tribes had already received allotments of land even before entering the Promised Land. That would have been highly motivational for the remaining clans of Israel, and Moses further challenges the Israelites to keep their covenant with the Lord so that “you may prosper in all that you do.” (Deut. 29:9)

As followers of Jesus, we too have been promised a place to live and thrive: “In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.” (John 14:2–3) We are challenged to continue to “abide in Him.” (John 15)

We need spiritual leaders in our lives. Those of us who have walked with the Lord for an extended period are expected to be spiritual leaders to others. But no matter which category you fall into, we all require the guidance and indwelling of the Holy Spirit to empower us as we progress on our journey of sanctification.

What are some of the things the Spirit does for us?

First: He helps us in our weakness: “For we do not know what to pray for as we ought.” (Rom. 8:26) The Spirit intercedes for us, speaking the words that need to be said and conforming them to the will of God. In his epistle, James, the brother of Jesus, tells us: “You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.” (James 4:2b–3)

Second: He enlightens our minds. “When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you.” (John 16:12–14)

The mind of man has been clouded from the truth as a result of the Fall. Without truth, the ways of God seem like foolishness, and each person does what is right in their own eyes. If it were not for this enlightenment by the Spirit of truth, mankind as a whole would suffer eternal damnation.

Lastly: The Spirit seals us until we can claim our inheritance in Paradise. “In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory.” (Ephesians 1:13–14)

Father, thank You for renewing us through the grace of Your Spirit and for the work He has accomplished in our lives. May we who have placed our faith in Your Son through the enlightenment of the Spirit strive to follow Jesus more completely, until we can claim our inheritance as sons and daughters in the Paradise that has been prepared for us.