

## **2 Peter 3:14-18**

*[Paul's] letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.*

*Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

Peter warns of distortions of God's truth. Not just of Paul's letters but of other scripture as well. These distortions can derail us. They cause destruction. They can cause us to be "carried away" by error.

As Galatians 5:9 says in the Amplified version, these distortions and half truths can ***"pervert the concept of faith and mislead the church."***

The solution given to us by Peter? – grow in grace and knowledge.

When you know the greater context and content of scripture, you can walk in grace and knowledge.

**Slave Bible** – the Bible used in attempts to convert slaves to Christianity. What's unique about it? Well... a whole lot is missing.

The whole Exodus from slavery in Egypt, where God doesn't just hear, but he responds to the cry of the enslaved, where their deliverance sets the tone for the theme of deliverance and freedom that's at the heart of scripture? Omitted.

And even though the action picks up at Exodus 19 and Sinai, some verses are still missing, like **Exodus 21:16**, which reads: *Kidnappers must be put to death, whether they are caught in possession of their victims or have already sold them as slaves.*

But of course the creators of the Slave Bible kept passages that they thought were necessary, like **Ephesians 6:5**: *Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ*

Why do I share this?

**AW Tozer** – *Heresy is not so much rejecting as selecting. The heretic simply selects the parts of the Scripture he wants to emphasize and lets the rest go.*

Selecting is certainly what the curators of the slave bible did- in the end, nearly **90%** of the Old Testament and **50%** of the New was totally removed.

We gasp in shock... who could omit portions of scripture like that?

But you could ask the question – are we reading the text? Do we know what's in it?

Or have we all but omitted it and only heard what's echoed by preachers and social media posts?

We hear those percentages of the OT and NT removed...

Only **30%** of Christians in the American church will read the Bible cover to cover.  
**82%** don't open it outside of Church at all.

The danger of this as we've seen again and again in this sermon series:  
When your faith is fed by bits and pieces, distortions and myths can slide in.  
When you take out part of the Bible, you're susceptible to the very things Peter warned us of –  
distortions that can cause us to be carried away by error.

In America myths black inferiority settled in as traditions, and before long were part of systemic structures. A myth pulled right out of scripture that was used to uphold slavery?

### **The Curse of Ham - Genesis 9:24-27 -**

*When Noah woke up from his stupor, he learned what Ham, his youngest son, had done.*

*Then he cursed Canaan, the son of Ham:*

*“May Canaan be cursed! **May he be the lowest of servants** to his relatives.”*

*Then Noah said, “May the Lord, the God of Shem, be blessed, and may Canaan be his servant! May God expand the territory of Japheth! May Japheth share the prosperity of Shem, and may Canaan **be his servant.**”*

Ham was the ancestor of much of Africa, and because his descendant was cursed to be slaves because of his sin, many white Christian leaders said that Africans and their descendants were destined to be slaves, and should accept it as their biblically prophesied, divinely ordained place in life. To rebel against it would be to rebel against scripture and the will of God.

Never mind the fact that Noah only cursed **one** of Ham's **four** sons. He had three others...  
Never mind the Bible doesn't much support the idea of generational curses.

Generational curses, though, have long been a thing not just in the church but in many pagan cultures. And it creeps its way into Church culture. From lust, to eating disorders, to a child out of wedlock – if there's a sin present in your family it's not just a script or pattern—it's a generational curse.

I want to look at this idea of **Generational Curses**, not because I think it's a myth that saturates our culture here and now, but it speaks to how we view raising and effecting the next generation. Which begs the question- what is the role of cause and effect, for good and bad?

**Numbers 14:18** – *The Lord is slow to anger and filled with unfailing love, forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion. But he does not excuse the guilty. He lays the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations.*

This verse certainly speaks to the power of **LEGACY**. Our decisions don't just effect us.  
The lie of sin is that it only effects me.

But while this verse certainly shows how our sins can affect the next generations, it isn't the support for generational curses the way many would apply it.

While the passage points to the consequences of our sins, it doesn't speak to the cause of them. It says children will be affected because of their parents sin, but not that children will sin because of them.

**Ezekiel 18:20** further dismantles this urban legend about generational sins...

It's a response by God to an ancient oft-used Proverb –

***“The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.”***

Meaning sometimes children suffer for their parents actions instead of the parents themselves.

God directly addresses this when he says:

***The child will not be punished for the parent's sins, and the parent will not be punished for the child's sins. Righteous people will be rewarded for their own righteous behavior, and wicked people will be punished for their own wickedness.***

While we pass on consequences, they aren't curses.

We can be **effected** generationally, but we aren't **bound** generationally by the sin of our parents.

**We do well to remember:**

**Galatians 3:13** – *Christ redeemed us from the curse by becoming a curse for us.*

To believe that we are bound is to reject the sufficiency of Jesus Christ.

To believe that we are cursed is to reject God's covenant of grace and the atonement of sin.

*Grace means that if you don't like what's been the fruit of your family tree, you get to plant a new one.*

Farming and gardening may be a good analogy for parenting, leading, ministry, and the sowing we do in other people's lives. The annual harvest may have more to do with weather than the skills or godliness of the farmer, and in a similar way the outcome and of the next generation is often reflective of far more than just their mentors, leaders and parents.

Is parenting important absolutely?

But we do our best and the outcome is out of our hands.

We like to think we have control over people and situations and outcomes.

*If we budget well, we'll have a good financial future.*

*If we commit to exercising and eating well, we'll enjoy good health.*

*If we create a godly home, we'll have godly children.*

These are all great pursuits, but the idea that doing them controls outcomes just isn't true.

But that's why churchy myths and clichés get tied to Cause and Effect

Generational Curses is the negative side of the coin.

The positive side? Mythology build on Proverbs 22:6.

**Proverbs 22:6** - *Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.*

We take this as a promise of cause and effect – a godly home will guarantee good, godly kids. This is a half truth that hurts in multiple ways.

As we talk about our Bible reading toolkit, it's important to remember the Bible is full of different kinds of texts, from history to poetry to letters to prophecy and on and on.

Proverbs 22:6? **It's a Proverb, not a Promise.**

Promises are checks we can take to the bank.

Proverbs are observations about life.

A memorable definition I once heard is that they are *short sentences drawn from long experience*. At their core they are general principles. But not promises.

So this is no guarantee placed on a method of parenting.

As much as we desire control, there's no promised cause and effect.

In a way it's still a promise, it's just a reverse promise...

The implication is that to parent passively is to invite trouble.

We see this throughout the greater content and context of scripture:

**Eli** made no attempt to discipline his sons, and not only did they die, Eli lost HIS life and legacy.

**King David** is praised for much in the Bible. He was a prolific warrior and king. The division

that defined Israel after David's reign and split the empire, causing it to only last two

generations, was due to the fact David was a great warrior king but an altogether absent parent.

Meanwhile in the New Testament, when Paul points to **Timothy's** faith, he points to the faith of Timothy's mother and grandmother as key.

It's why the New Testament supports the idea that a minister of the gospel's first ministry should be their home. Their wife. Their kids. ***Parenting well is a priority.***

Because of the weight of parenting, we can become overbearing and overprotective.

It's why ***"Let your kids make mistakes"*** is good advice.

But the pendulum can swing too far.

We can say "let your kid make mistakes" in an effort to look gracious, when really it's a copout to be passive. There's a tension in between being controlling and being passive, and often we navigate it poorly.

We should prepare the child for the path, and point them to it again and again, doing it in the best way we can for our own unique kids.

But where the application of Proverbs 22:6 goes off the rails is

***"when he is old he will not turn from it."***

Somewhere along the way many of us have confused **"Will not turn"** with **"Will return"**

Somewhere of us add "re" to turn and take this as a promise that if our kids goes off the rails, they will return.

But they've bought into a spiritual urban legend...

- but unlike a generational curse meaning children will be cursed by the sins of their parents, they buy into a promise that means children will be redirected by the godly atmosphere once provided by their parents.

Cause and effect and control in the opposite direction.

When the verses meaning gets off the rails by a couple degrees and turns into parenting mythology and a churchy cliché, the it becomes a half truth that can hurt.

**CREDIT** – we take more credit than we should for the good in our lives.

To parent is to steward the lives of children graced to you by God.  
And to do it well is a grace.

More gratitude. Less pride. More praise. Less credit for what we don't control.  
The other side of the coin with pride is...

**BLAME** – when we assume control we take far too much blame.

*Good parents can blame themselves for the rebellion of their children.*

*They spend their life carrying a weight God never wanted them to carry.*

We add to our suffering by assuming power and control greater than what we had.

These are simultaneous truths:

*We are accountable for how we parent our children.*

*We aren't accountable for how they turn out.*

This is why as much as anything, parenting has the power to burst the illusion of control.

That can be a gift if we let it.

It reminds us a truth of life - that we bear a sacred responsibility.

But we don't have ultimate control.

Proverbs put an emphasis on teaching the next generation, and you can take that to heart not just as a parent, but as a teacher, mentor, or leader in any fashion. But Proverbs again and again puts the onus for leaning not on the teacher, but the student.

The most frustrating AND liberating part of ministry, parenting, relationships, leadership:

*You can't make the decisions for somebody.*

When we give up control we can find rest in the one who is in control.

Like the farmer and his garden in the parable in Mark, we can do what we can in our own agency, put in our work, plant our seeds, sow as we will.... and then go to sleep.

But going back to gardening again, all the way back to a garden, the one in Eden...

**Adam and Eve** –

They sought control. Rule.

Our agency in life- our capacity to make choices and take action- shouldn't be confused with self-sufficiency or absolute control.

We are called to be part of a world held together by the sovereign power of God.

The good news? It means we do our best and can trust Him with the rest.

Secondly - they cancel once and for all, from the first pages of the Bible, this idea that the right setting produces godly behavior.

If rebellion can happen in the garden of Eden- the ideal, perfect environment with leadership from God himself- it can happen anywhere, including a godly home.

Third...

We all have a generational curse.

But it isn't rooted in the sins of our parents. Nor those of Ham or alike.

It's rooted in the original sin of Adam.

Our sin nature is a real danger.

When it arises in our children, the finger shouldn't point to a generational curse or the parents.

It points all the way back to Adam.

### **Romans 5:12, 17-18**

*When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.*

*For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.*

*Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone.*

**Galatians 3:13** – *Christ redeemed us from the curse by becoming a curse for us.*

The curse of Adam was laid on Jesus, and he took it on for me and you.

We are no longer bound to sin, and no longer bound to bear judgment for it.

## **YOU HAVE AGENCY**

You aren't trapped by cause and effect. You aren't bound. You aren't chained.

By your father's sins.

Or by your sins.

You're been given the gift of grace. The gift of freedom.

With that gift and with that agency **you're called to leave a legacy.**

One of the best ways to invest in the next generation? As a parent, teacher, mentor, or friend...

Walk with Christ and live for God passionately

Young people are sensitive to inconsistency. It's one of the main reasons youth turn from the beliefs of the previous generation.

I've talked to multiple people recently, the last couple weeks, who are older now but were turned away from the church in their youth due to segregation and racism within it.

Live and love God. One of the significant seeds we sow into the next generation is our own legacy- both our beliefs and our behavior, and the testimony those produce.

Cause and Effect...

**YOU DON'T HAVE CONTROL**

Not just parenting. Evangelism. Discipleship.

Less control. More committing it to God.

Less pride. More gratitude.

Less credit. More praise.