# Cursed to Bless

# God Promises to Bless People Yet Again!

Episode: 7

Passage: Jeremiah 31:31-34, Ezekiel 36:24-28

Characters: - Host - Sam - Pastor - Ben - Pete - Ruth - Kate

Authors: - Martin Olmos - Richard Utber

Language: en-AU

### Intro

**ATMOS**: Theme music 5 sec, Host background music below host’s volume

**HOST**: Hello, this is Mary, your host. Welcome to Cursed to Bless, the show that asks a big question: Why is life so hard, when God is so good? We hear God blesses us, but how? Money, health, happiness? The answers are found in *Jesus*, in who he is and what he’s done. We see this when we read the Bible as *one big story*, with Jesus as the hero from start to finish.

**HOST**: In this episode, we learn that God speaks through his prophets a message of hope that he will change our hard hearts by his Spirit.

**HOST**: Remember to pause, read the passage, and answer the questions when you hear the sound. Our first question is: When have you felt great relief during a difficult time? Pause and discuss now.

**FX**: Pause prompt, then 5 seconds silence

**HOST**: Thank you.

### Bible Study

**FX**: Flasback Outro

**ATMOS**: Host background

**HOST**: Listeners, let’s listen to the friends’ Bible study. They were all sitting at Pastor’s house…

**FX**: Flashback Intro.

**ATMOS**: House living room

**PASTOR**: Welcome everyone. Let’s pray first: “Dear Father, please help us listen carefully to your Word now, and learn together. In Jesus name…”

**ALL**: Amen.

**PASTOR**: Let’s review our memory verse from last time: Romans chapter 3, verses 10-12. I will read it out loud. When I pause, say the word that comes next, without looking at your Bible.

**FX**: In each ‘…’ gap below, Response prompt, then 2 seconds silence

**PASTOR**: (Leave a 2 second pause where you see ‘…’ and say the answer word with emphasis.)
“As it is written:”There is no one … *righteous*, not even one; there is no one who … *understands*; there is no one who seeks … *God*. All have turned away, they have together become … *worthless*; there is no one who does … *good*, not even one.”

**TRANSLATOR**: Replace this with text from the local Bible translation. Pick the same significant words for the gaps, as much as possible.

**PASTOR**: Thank you! Today, we’re reading Jeremiah chapter 31, verses 31-34. Let’s read it together now.

**FX**: Pause prompt, then page flicking for 3 seconds.

**PASTOR**: Thank you. Kate, what are the main ideas in this passage.

**KATE**: Well, God is promising a new covenant. It sounds really good. It’ll be different.

**RUTH**: Yes, God is encouraging his people, who are weighed down with curses because of their disobedience.

**PETE**: But how can we be sure this is a reliable message?

**PASTOR**: Ah, God is speaking through his prophets. These are his chosen messengers to speak to his people.

**KATE**: They could tell what was going to happen, right?

**PETE**: Man, I could be so rich if I could tell the future…

**PASTOR**: Well, they often warned God’s people about what was about to happen. But their job was bigger than just predicting events. They spoke God’s words so they would repent, trust God, and obey him.

**SAM**: But I thought if the people disobeyed they would be cursed? We talked about that last lesson. That was the covenant – like a contract!

**BEN**: Yes – verse 32 says the new covenant, or contract, won’t be like the old one, when God rescued his people from Egypt.

**SAM**: What was wrong with the old one?

**PETE**: Maybe God was too harsh with them.

**PASTOR**: Nothing was wrong with it. Look at verse 32, everyone. What went wrong?

**BEN**: *Israel* broke the covenant.

**RUTH**: Even though God was like a faithful husband to Israel. He was kind. It was a good contract.

**SAM**: So why do they need a new one?

**BEN**: Because his people broke the old one. Their hearts were still so hard. They didn’t trust in God’s kindness.

**SAM**: But what about the curses? Someone has to pay when a contract is broken.

**PETE**: Ah, I think they have to suffer the curses for a while to earn those blessings. Then God can bless them.

**BEN**: I don’t think so. Look, verse 34: “I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

**PETE**: (Skeptical)
Ha! That’s too easy. How can God forget something?

**PASTOR**: God doesn’t accidentally ‘forget’. He *chooses* not to remember our sins.

**BEN**: Really! God will do anything so his people can come back.

**SAM**: But how can God just forgive sins? Someone has to pay…

**PASTOR**: Yes - God will! That’s good news, isn’t it?

**SAM**: Yes, it does sound good…

**PASTOR**: We said this new covenant would be different. How would it be different?

**SAM**: Verse 33 says God will put his laws in their minds and hearts.

**RUTH**: Verse 34 also says that they will all know God. They will be God’s people, and God will be theirs…

**SAM**: I don’t really feel like I know God. I feel there’s something wrong with me, and God isn’t accepting me.

**PASTOR**: Can you tell us more?

**SAM**: I’m glad God forgives me, but I know myself - I will sin again. How can I *really* change? I *want* to change, but my heart feels so *hard*. It would take a miracle to change it!

**PETE**: You have to work really hard to reach your full potential. I’ve started following seven steps to success I found on the internet. By this time next year, I’ll be a new man - you’ll see!

**PASTOR**: These steps might have some good ideas, but our hearts are set against God. Let’s read a passage from another prophet to answer Sam’s question. Look up Ezekiel, chapter 36, verses 24-28. Let’s read it now.

**FX**: Pause prompt, then page flicking for 3 seconds.

**PASTOR**: Sam, can you summarise this passage?

**SAM**: God is promising to wash Israel clean from their sin and bring them back to God’s promised land. I like how God washes them - I often feel too dirty for God.

**RUTH**: Oh, look at verse 26. God promises to give us a new heart and a new spirit.

**PASTOR**: Yes. And in verse 27 God promises his own Holy Spirit will live in us! That’s what Jeremiah was talking about too.

**BEN**: Ah… *that’s* how God writes his law in our hearts - right?

**PASTOR**: Yes. God changes us from the inside. Notice all the times that God says “I will …”?

**BEN:** Yes! So it’s God that does all the work of washing us clean…

**PASTOR:** So Sam, you’re right. It *would* take a miracle to change our hearts. And God promises to do the miracle when we trust in him!

**PETE**: I bet this covenant didn’t last long - it doesn’t matter to us now anyway.

**PASTOR**: Actually, a little later, in chapter 37, God promises two amazing things: David will be king forever, and all nations will know that God makes his people holy.

**PETE**: But hasn’t David died by now? How can a man be king *forever*.

**PASTOR**: Good question Pete! David certainly died. But a special king came much later, and he was called ‘Son of David’. You need a *forever king* to keep a *forever promise*.

**PETE**: (Cynical)
Well, whoever that is, it feels like we’ll be waiting forever for these promises…

### Questions to Pastor and Application

**PASTOR**: OK, what questions would *you* like to ask?

**BEN**: Pastor, you mentioned a *forever king*. Is that Jesus?

**PASTOR**: Right! He is the creator of a new covenant. He is the complete *fulfilment* of all God’s plans to remove the curse and bring blessing to all the world.

**BEN**: So God’s people will live in the land under a good king forever, and all peoples will be blessed. It reminds me of Genesis chapter 12!

**RUTH**: And here we are, centuries later, hearing that God makes his people holy - that’s a big blessing! It gives me a lot of hope.

**SAM**: Pastor, why does God wait so long to fulfil his promises? I mean, it’s hundreds of years between Abraham and Jesus!

**PETE**: Yeah! And it’s been over 2000 years since Jesus, and nothing’s happened!

**PASTOR:** Ha! If God had not waited you wouldn’t have been born! God has waited patiently because he wants more and more people to believe in Jesus. He wants *many* children to live with him forever in his new creation. But Sam, God also waited so long to fulfil his promises to Abraham because he wanted to show just how sinful people are. As we learned last week, God gave Israel everything they could possibly want, but they still rebelled against him. God was teaching us that we need a Saviour to fix us.

**BEN**: Pastor, the promises in Jeremiah and Ezekiel are given to *Israel*. Are they really for *us*?

**PASTOR**: Great question. As we read the rest of the Bible, we see God’s promises to Israel are widened out to include people from all nations. For example, Galatians chapter three, verse 29, says “If you belong to Christ then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” So, if you believe in Jesus you become a real Israelite!

**BEN:** So all this is for *us*! Israel’s history becomes *our* history, the promises to Abraham are *our* promises, and Israel’s prophets are *our* prophets.

**PASTOR:** Yes! And it shows us that the New Testament helps us understand the Old Testament, because it tells us about Jesus, who is the final and complete fulfilment of all the Old Testament. For example, Ezekiel said that God’s people will live in the land forever with God’s King ruling over them. When Jesus comes we know that he is God’s King but he says that his Kingdom is not of this world. It is heaven. So the fulfilment of Ezekiel’s promise is actually heaven, the New Creation. Heaven is a real place - the real, perfect land that was promised to Abraham!

**RUTH:** Ahh, it’s like what you keep saying to us, that the Bible is one big story of God’s salvation, with Jesus as the hero from start to finish.

**PASTOR**: Yes. OK, let’s talk about our own lives now. What helps you appreciate God’s patience to sinful people like us?

**BEN**: It feels like we are really stubborn in sinning, but God is even more determined to keep his promises.

**RUTH**: Yes, his faithfulness is stronger than our stubbornness. God is so patient. He keeps speaking to his people. If a boy said he loved me, but then kept chasing other girls, I would give up on him without any second chances. He’d be lucky if I said hello to him!

**PETE**: (awkward)
Ruth, I talked to another girl at church on Sunday, but … ahmm … she was just asking me what time it was. I hope you’ll keep saying hello to me.

**ALL**: (some sniggering)

**KATE**: I think God hates all the injustice in the world, and the suffering our sin causes. But I’m glad he holds back his judgement.

**SAM**: Yes, his patience gives us a chance to repent. I’m glad he’s patient with me!

**PASTOR**: Thank you everyone. Let’s read our memory verse on the whiteboard: Matthew chapter 5, verse 17. Let’s read it together now.

**ALL**: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”

**PASTOR**: Let’s memorise that for our next lesson. Ben, would you pray for us please?

**BEN**: OK. Good Father, thank you for the prophets you sent, and for the message of hope you gave them to speak. It’s amazing that you would include us, here and now, into this hope. We praise you for the way Jesus makes your prophets’ message of hope come true. Please help us listen and trust his message. In Jesus’ name…

**ALL**: Amen.

**PASTOR**: Thank you everyone, see you next time.

**ALL**: Goodbye pastor.

### Interactive Questions

**FX**: Flashback outro

**HOST**: Listeners, let’s answer some questions now. Say your answer aloud. **HOST**: What did God’s prophets tell Israel? Was it a *message of hope* or a *prediction about the harvest*?

**FX**: Response prompt, then 5 seconds silence

**HOST**: A message of hope. God used prophets to speak a message of hope to his stubbornly sinful people.

**HOST**: How will God help us change our stubborn hearts? Will he give us *His Holy Spirit* or *extra strength*?

**FX**: Response prompt, then 5 seconds silence

**HOST**: His Holy Spirit. God promises to change our stubborn hearts through the power of his Holy Spirit.

**HOST**: I will say some sentences. For each sentence, say ‘True’ if you agree, or ‘False’ if you disagree.

**HOST**: True or False: God will forgive our sins.

**FX**: Response prompt, then 2 seconds silence

**HOST**: True. God will forgive our sins when we trust in Jesus.

**HOST**: True or False: Although we make mistakes sometimes, deep down we are all good people that want to please God.

**FX**: Response prompt, then 2 seconds silence

**HOST**: False. Deep down we have stubborn hearts that are set against God. We need God’s Holy Spirit to change us from the inside.

**HOST**: True or False: God will bring eternal blessing to his people in his place, heaven.

**FX**: Response prompt, then 2 seconds silence

**HOST**: True. God’s promises are fully and finally kept in heaven, for ever.

**HOST**: Now, discuss this question: how do you see Jesus fulfilling God’s promises to Abraham and the prophetic message of hope?

**FX**: Pause prompt, then 5 seconds silence.

### Outro

**FX**: Flashback outro

**HOST**: Listeners, now we’ve heard about Sam’s day, listen to what he prayed before going to sleep…

**ATMOS**: Soft prayer background effect (e.g. chimes) fade in

**SAM**: Dear God, Please soften my heart - it’s so hard sometimes. It’s like my sin is deep inside of me, and I can’t pull it out. I guess I can’t - only you can. Be patient with me, like you were with Israel. I’m loving the Bible more and more because of this group. Can it really be that all of your Bible is really one story that Jesus makes true? Please keep speaking to me! Amen. ::: {custom-style=“Instruction”} **ATMOS**: Prayer background fade out :::

**HOST**: Thank you for completing this lesson. We learnt that God speaks through the prophets a message of hope that he will change our hard hearts by his Spirit. Will you join me for our next lesson? We will learn that God himself, in Jesus, came to pay the death penalty of the curse so that it could be removed. Please read Matthew chapter 27, verses 27-54 before then. Now you can discuss how this lesson matters in your life: What helps you appreciate God’s patience to sinful people like us? Goodbye.

**FX**: Theme music fade out.