

How To curse Yourself Thoroughly.

Haggai 1, Mal 1 & 3.

INTRODUCTION

A sermon on cursing yourself? Why would we want to talk about cursing yourself? Well, it's because I believe some are already doing it, without knowing, and so I want to teach you how to do it properly. I want to teach you how to curse yourself so thoroughly, that even God will say "WO-lo-lo-lo-lo-LO!" The sorts that release the power of heaven against you! I'm talking about curses that God himself has said HE will effect against you. POWERFUL CURSES!

III – Arab curse

Read Haggai 1:1 - 11

1. FORGETTING TO GIVE TO THE LORD'S WORK : Haggai's situation was very much like present day Kenya. The people of Israel had come back to Jerusalem from exile – great times those, much celebration and rejoicing, and one of the things they had made a commitment to do was rebuild the temple in Jerusalem as it was central to their identity, their heritage and their worship of God. The work had started well and proceeded fast, but then things changed – King Cyrus, who had given them freedom, died. Cyrus had been an enlightened king. He had required each of the outlying districts of the Persian Kingdom, of which Judah was one, to have local autonomy. His son Cambyses, showed less sympathy for vassal states, and doubtlessly contributed to the failure of the Jews to press forward with the rebuilding. And then there were local landowners and Samaritans who opposed the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.

After Cambyses came many coops and hardships, famine, revolt and mis-rule. Moral in the provinces was low, the economy had long collapsed, and men concentrated on the betterment of their own circumstances. To them, this was an inappropriate time to spend effort and wealth on the house of God, and they had good, understandable reasons for not giving.

In other words, they had reasonable excuses WHY they could not give towards the temple. What is the total salaries earned here ? Say 2,000,000/= . So if all of us were giving a tithe faithfully, we should collect at least 200,000/= per month. BUT, the Sunday collection here is only ?????_____ per month.

Now, I'm sure if you were to talk to many people, there are many good reasons why they do not tithe – the desire may be there, but it's not happening. This then, is the first group of people who like to curse themselves thoroughly. They have good, understandable reasons for not giving – making ends meet, the poor economy, the mortgage, trying to better themselves from their difficult circumstances . . . good reasons, but listen to what God, who knows all the reason, and knows how valid they are, says. *"I have called a drought on your pocket!"* What Lord, what do you mean?

You see, when you don't give to the Lord, so that you can keep what should be a tithe and have a little more for your own needs, you have done the worst thing possible. You think you have more to spend on your needs, but infact what you have done is curse your pocket. What God was telling the Israelites is that when you don't give, then he removes his protection from you so that the troubles of life that eat away your money increase – illnesses, being pick-pocketed, things breaking down, car repairs, productivity, worker problems, and the money you took from the Lord NEVER actually accomplishes what it was supposed to do and your last state is worse than your first!

The thing about this sort of not giving is that the abundant ways God would have helped you stretch your resources, the many ways he would have protected the little you have, the 100's of ways he would have multiplied your little, all dry up – and the 100/= accomplishes very little.

Have you ever had that experience of putting 2000/= in your pocket in the morning, and in the evening you're asking "Haiya, what happened to my money? I mean I only bought a few items, and it's all gone" or the alternative experience of putting 2000/= in your pocket and it seems to last there for a week, 2 weeks. This is the Lord's doing.

Not giving to the Lord so you can meet your own legitimate needs is easy because THE LORD NEVER COMPLAINS, but it is the worst thing you could do to yourself for he says

"Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it... You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the oil and whatever the ground produces, on men and cattle, and on the labor of your hands."

Some of us here HAVE A DROUGHT ON OUR POCKETS, because, for good, perfectly reasonable and understandable reasons, we are not giving to the Lord so we can get other, more urgent things done. So the first way to curse your finances thoroughly is for those who think they have a legitimate reason why they should not be giving.

2. GIVING LEFT-OVERS TO THE LORD : But there is an even better way to curse your finances. It's given to us in

Read - Malachi 1:6 – 9, 13, 14.

Um-huu! It's by giving the left-overs to the Lord. This is where you give the finished, crippled, not-so-nice-looking things to God.

III – Man and twin calves.

How often do we do this? You give the things that you would otherwise like to throw out, to the Lord. If you were to give them to a friend, they would be embarrassed, but the Lord doesn't mind does he? After all, you can't look a gift horse in the mouth.

III – Garden sale with soiled men's underwear.

In our tithe we also give left-overs by reaching blindly, mindlessly into our pockets and fishing around, pulling out whatever coins or blue denominations we have, and dropping them into the offering bag. Sometimes we even give the coins because they are too heavy for our pocket.

Another way we give him left-overs is when we promise to give something, a special offering, meet a special need, sponsor a special child, fulfil a special project, and then latter on we duck! Let me extend this a bit further, one of the most valuable resource we have is time; but how many of us have made a habit of giving God our left-over time, or our crippled, injured and diseased time. God is terribly offended when we give the left-overs to him.

"When you bring injured, crippled or diseased animals and offer them as sacrifices, should I accept them from your hands?" says the LORD. ¹⁴ "Cursed is the cheat who has an acceptable male in his flock and vows to give it, but then sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord.

This is the 2nd way then that many of us are cursing our resources with a powerful curse – by giving God the left-overs, and it is no wonder that we earn a good salary (nobody thinks they earn a good salary, but you ask your neighbor and they'll tell you it's good), but we seem to accomplish so little each month.

3. “BORROWING” FROM THE LORD : The 3rd way to curse your resources so that you are always struggling financially is specially for those who know they should be giving, but are not. It's given in **Malachi 3:8 – 9**.

Actually the text calls it stealing, but we call it borrowing. Here's how it happens - this is what I call “The Worst Loan Policy EVER”.

- You take a loan from the Lord, or you say “Aaii Bwana Maze Lord, si ni even you you understand? Just let me borrow the tithe this month, and I'll pay back next month. Ka-loan kadogo tu”.
- Next month you say “Bwana things are thick. I'll just borrow once more, then next month I'll pay, tena I'll add a bonus. Si ni how even you?”
- Next month you come and say “Bwana maze Lord, the amount is too big. These are what the banks call Bad Debt, non-performing loans. Si ni we wipe it out and start all over again?”

We have all played this game, myself included, and suffered the consequences. What are the consequences here? Well with the first curse, the curse is that God removes his protection over your resources. With the second curse, you dishonor the name of God, you shame God. With this 3rd curse, you deny God the opportunity to bless you. Because, you see, the context of Verse 9 “you are under a curse . . .” is verses 10 - 12. You realize how horrible the curse is, when you recognize how bountiful the blessing would have been. Here are the 3 marks of a Malachi 3:10 blessing

- The blessing is so great that you will not have enough room to contain it (Vs 10).
- God himself will protect it (Vs 11).

- Even others will call you truly blessed (Vs 12).

Notice one other thing about these blessings God says he will bless you with – we are often short sighted because we think If I give 1000/= he promises to give me back a hundred-fold – so that will be 100,000/= . God's blessings are truly bountiful, but not necessarily monetary

- Your crops will be abundant
- The Lord will protect your resources
- The labor of your hands will be fruitful
- You will plant, and harvest much.
- You will eat, and be full on very little.
- You will drink, and have your fill.
- You put on few clothes, and be warm.
- You will earn wages, and they will last and last and last.
- You will expect much from what you earn, and will see it accomplish it.
- What you bring home, will last to the end of the month.

And that's not all – what about blessings of good health in your family, blessings of security at night, blessings of marital peace and peace with the kid's, blessings of energy to work and excel, blessings of contacts and colleagues who aren't double invoicing . . . many, many things. None of these can be quantified, but each comes as a blessing.

A young pastor once asked me – “*Should pastor's tithe, since we are in the ministry anyway?*” What you don't realize is that if a pastor doesn't tithe, he denies himself God's abundant blessings, even though he is in ministry.

I have heard us pray here after the offering, “*Bless those who didn't give because they don't have, and help them to find work so that they may give*” And for those who have very little, the right prayer is “*Lord help them to give out of their need, because you*

see the generosity of their heart, and will abundantly bless them in return.”

I have seen these sorts of blessings many times. Let me tell you our story, not to show you how rich we are, but to show you how God blesses. My wife and I made a decision to get serious about our giving several years ago. We started with 10 % and committed ourselves to grow by 1% per year until we reach at least 25%. We also decided that unless God called us to a life of poverty, we will seek to live a simple lifestyle, keep our needs and consumption down, and free as much as we can for the Lord's work. We put a limit to how much we ever want to own, so that we would be struck by the plight of “unlimited greed”. As each year we have sought to give faithfully, we have seen God's blessings

We could tell you story after story about God's faithfulness and blessings. Several years back when Bea was looking for a job, she wanted a job where she could be a school chaplain, but as we looked at our financial need, she needed to earn a certain amount. So we prayed for a job of a certain salary so that we could afford rent, and pay school fees thru her salary. God, in his goodness, gave her a job as a CRE teacher in a good school, that paid the exact amount that we were praying for, BUT a job that also gave the kids free education in the same school, and free transport to and from school.

We could tell you story after story about God's faithfulness and blessings, but my dear friends, I am convinced that these blessing link to our commitment and faithfulness to tithe. Look at your own giving habits, are you cursing yourself thoroughly, or are you blessing yourself?