

## FROM CURSED TO CHOSEN

Haggai Week 7

November 12, 2017

Here's a trivia challenge for you.

Anyone want to venture a guess as to how many time the word curse (and its derivatives)  
is used in the Bible? 284 times

People don't talk today much about curse, or being cursed.

But even though we may not use that *language* today,  
but we experience its meaning of it all the time.

You want something really badly, but it's like a mirage,  
A beautiful vision that evaporates every time you get close?

I'm going to let you in to my heart this morning.  
Do you know what I want, really really, badly?  
I want every chair in this room to be filled.  
It's breaks my heart to see empty chairs.

I want people to love being in the King's house.  
To worship, to learn, to share their lives.

But it never quite happens as I imagine it could and *should*.  
There are moments when it looks like everything's going to take off,  
but then evaporates into like that elusive mirage.  
It's terribly discouraging.

I'm sure I'm not the only one with elusive dreams.

I'm not the only one who feels like life is conspiring against me?

Maybe for you its a promotion you desperately need,  
but someone else always is in line ahead of you.

Or perhaps it's a relationship with someone who has caught your eye, but  
every time you get the courage to make a move, you do something stupid.

Or is a family, or a child or your health you long for.  
You get your hopes up,  
But, bad things keep happening that thwart your progress?

You want to heal from your back injuries,  
but every time you get a little better,  
you're in another car accident.

Or you have a loved one who's stuck  
some destructive behavior.

Your son or daughter can't escape their drug or alcohol addiction

Or perhaps you or someone you know has been in an abusive relationship  
and break out of.

Or perhaps you have *left* an abusive relationship,  
but have end up in another equally abusive relationship.  
You were *sure* you'd never make the same mistake again!  
But there you are!

You can't seem to break out of a cycle of defeat  
and break into to a new future.

OK, so maybe you don't say, "I'm living under a curse."  
But when people in Bible times talked about a curse?  
it's these kinds of experiences they were describing.  
And they took curses very seriously.  
They knew the *power* of a curse, and . . .  
if someone had the power to *break* a curse,  
they were listening.

As we return today to the final story in the book of Haggai,  
we'll discover that Zerubbabel knew *exactly* what it felt like  
to live under the heavy weight of a curse.  
And he was as desperate for a break out of it as I am, and as you are here today.

As you will recall, Zerubbabel was commissioned by King Cyrus of Persia  
to return with a small remnant of Israelites to Jerusalem to rebuild  
the temple that had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar.

It was a *huge* task and apparently such a daunting one, that the LORD sent  
the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel and the people to give  
the correction and the encouragement they needed.

So far we have heard how the Lord God through Haggai  
addressed the obstacles that stood in the way of their success.

He basically said,  
If you feel like you're living under a curse, it's cause you are.  
It's not your imagination.  
You're doing three things that are blocking the blessing.

1. The lackadaisical attitude the people had toward God and toward the work of the temple.
2. The negativity that birthed a critical spirit that demoralized others.  
They were so negative they couldn't see the good God was doing  
right in front of their noses!
3. The dangerous assumption that God would overlook an unholy heart  
because they were doing such a holy work.

Hello! Help us Lord!

Once the people repented and changed their ways, God says,  
From this day on (the day they changed their hearts) I will bless you.

They went from busted to blessed!

But *now* it's time to speak directly to Zerubbabel.

WORD OF GOD SPEAK

### **Haggai 2:20-23**

The word of the Lord came to Haggai a second time on the twenty-fourth day of the month:  
(early in December)

“Tell Zerubbabel governor of Judah that I am going to shake the heavens and the earth.  
I will overturn royal thrones and shatter the power of the foreign kingdoms.  
I will overthrow chariots and their drivers; horses and their riders will fall,  
each by the sword of his brother.

The Lord reminds Zerubbabel that *HE* has the power to shake down any and everything.  
I'm bigger than the Empire of Babylon.  
I'm bigger than the King of Persia

I'm bigger than any power holder in your life  
Any parent or in-law that knows how to push your buttons.  
Any child whose got you wrapped around their finger.  
    (a counsellor once told me, "The person who holds the power in your house  
    is your 14-year old daughter!" – and she was right!)  
Any boss who badgers you with unreasonable demands.  
Any belief system that has a fierce grip on someone you love  
Any systemic injustice, that nameless oppressor that  
    thwarts your every attempt to get ahead.  
Any substance – any opioid, drug or bottle that taunts you with its power.  
Any paralyzing negative self-image that says, "Don't even try!"

I am bigger than anything in your life that needs shaking up  
    or a good shake down.

But it's what the Lord Almighty says next to Zerubbabel that is the huge game-changer.

“On that day,’ declares the Lord Almighty, ‘I will take you,  
    my servant Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel,’ declares the Lord,  
‘and I will make you like my signet ring,

He gets a ring!

Some of you have a ring that you cherish and wear every day.

    Show me? Why is it special? Wedding ring? Class ring?

The Lord Almighty says he is going to make Zerubbabel like his Signet ring.

To understand the startling impacted this had on Zerubbabel,  
    you need to know a little of the back story.

Well, before the days of radio, television, and twitter,

    when a king wanted to make an authoritative decision, he used a signet ring.

He wrote his decision on parchment, folded it and

    sealed with softened wax on which was imprinted the design of the king's ring.

There was no greater symbol of authority

For Zerubbabel, it would have been a longed-for possession

    but life and history had conspired against him.

He labored under the heavy weight of a curse,

    assuming that desire would always be but an elusive dream.

You see, Zerubbabel had inherited a curse.

The curse his grandfather, Jehoiakim, had brought on the family.

You can read the story in Jeremiah 22 and 36 (Jeremiah 36:1-3, 24, 27-27, 29-31, 22:24,30 NIV)

Before the Babylonian captivity, the prophet Jeremiah sent Jehoiakim  
a dire warning of impending judgment, BUT . . .

The king and all his attendants who heard all these words showed no fear,  
nor did they tear their clothes. (sign of repentance . . . instead . . . )

The king burned the scroll containing the words  
that Baruch had written at Jeremiah's dictation.

The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah again:

Tell Jehoiakim king of Judah, 'This is what the Lord says:

You burned that scroll , . . .

Therefore, this is what the Lord says about Jehoiakim king of Judah:

He will have no one to sit on the throne of David;

his body will be thrown out and exposed to the heat by day and the frost by night.

I will punish him and his children and his attendants for their wickedness;

“As I live, declares the Lord, though you were the signet ring on my right hand,  
yet I would tear you off...

That's a power packed curse.

Now, imagine that's your grandfather was the signet ring that got torn off.

EVERYBODY knows what a failure your grandfather was,

and everyone knows that the curse was not only on him, but on his children.

Do people trust you as a leader?

Based on that curse, do you even trust *yourself* to be a leader.

You live in the shadow of that curse,

You expect life to continually conspire against you.

Now do you understand the startling impact Haggai's words would have had on him?

‘and I will make *you* like my signet ring,

These words went straight to the core of his being.

This is the reversal of the *curse*.

People of God, do you know what that means for you and me?  
It's not our imagination that we have lived under a curse.  
In fact Paul tells us in Galatians 3 that we all stand under a curse.  
"Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."

We feel it. We live under the weight of condemnation, self-doubt, shame, inadequacy . . .  
We feel that life is conspiring against us.

But the good news, the gospel, in Jesus is that the curse is broken.  
Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written:  
"Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

And why did Christ do this?  
He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham  
might come to the Gentiles (that's everybody) through Christ Jesus,  
so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

The Lord has done for *US* – you and me – what he did for Zerubbabel.  
He has broken the curse that hangs over our lives.

Jesus makes us *HIS* signet ring, so in his name we can take authority  
so we can say *NO* to the curse and *YES* to life.

And there's more!

God says, "Do you know Zerubbabel *why* I'm doing this?"  
'Cause you're a really nice person?  
'Cause you deserve a break today?

Nope.

I will make you like my signet ring,  
for I have chosen you,' declares the Lord Almighty."

Being chosen is *SO* much better than being deserving.

Cause if it's because I'm deserving,  
Well, I know how quickly that can change . . .  
But if it's because I'm *chosen* by the sovereign will of God,  
I say *THANK YOU* with humility and deep gratitude!

This is good news, family.

Like Zerubbabel we go from  
Cursed to Chosen ---- You are Chosen!

Now we get to application part of this sermon.  
I confess I wrote the ending on Wed.

I was pleased cause it was a real crowd pleasing ending.

Rise up people of God!

The curse is broken in Jesus name So . . .

Say goodbye to that dead-end job,

I'm chosen for something better for you!

Get out of that abusive relationship

No one's going to mistreat me, I'm a child of the King.

Tell the powerful people in your life to get off your FaceBook page!

I've got a signet ring, so don't mess with me!

Maybe I wouldn't have said it quite that way, but you get the idea.

But then on Thursday morning the Spirit of God said – delete that!

The curse is broken in Jesus name, YES, SO . . .

- You can enter the secret place of the most High –  
where there is no condemnation or paralyzing insecurity.
- You can dwell under the peaceful shadow of his wings  
Even in the most hostile of situations
- In fact, because the curse is broken in Jesus name,  
you can absorb the hostilities of other people  
you can absorb and neutralize it.  
because they no longer define you.
- The curse of drudgery is broken, so you can find the grace to not be weary in well doing  
even at your less than fulfilling job.

You don't have to wait until your circumstances get better  
To live free from the curse.

Because the curse is broken, you can find righteous peace and joy -- NOW  
For the Kingdom of God – which is NOW yours –  
is righteous peace and joy in the Holy Spirit!

That's going to take some surrendering

Just like Oprah surrendered.

Not a surrender that just takes your desperation prayers with you.

But surrender that passes through your desperation prayers and walks away free.

So, rise up people of God and step away from the curse  
and step into life.