

Curses, *Causes* Clauses

A Message of Hope for the
Oppressed and Fearful

MODUPE KUMAPAYI

Curses, Causes and Clauses

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And I can't leave out my editor, John Oseh, managing editor at International Christian Book Network (ICBN), Lagos; a kind man whose kindness and insights reflect even on the pages of all my books so far! God bless you, sir!

DEDICATION

To those who desire freedom.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

SHALL THE prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? This question is quoted directly from the Scriptures, Isaiah 49:24 to be precise; and in the verse that follows God gives an answer. In many words He says through His prophet, **YES! But only by Him.**

I'm sure, either by the title of this book or by the Scripture verse shared, you already guessed the central themes of this book; captivity and freedom! By them I'm hoping to answer, by God's grace alone and with God's word, questions like:

- Who is the prey?
- Who is the mighty?
- Who is the lawful captive?
- How did they lose their freedom?
- How are they continually held up in captivity, and
- How does one get God to be their ally?

I don't intend to use the original context of the Scripture above to do the explaining in this book but, as has become my usual style, I will use a (different) Bible story – which is in fact true event – in order to provide the answers we seek.

Will everyone connect with this book? I hope so. I believe everyone should read this book, especially those who mourn; because, their lives are bitter; i.e.,

accompanied by severe and repeated pain or suffering! Believer and non-believer alike who after thorough assessment of their lives believe they are being afflicted with heavy burdens that they can't seem to escape no matter how hard they try. I believe with all my heart that this book is God's gift to you. It will be light for you; it will comfort you by bringing you the deliverance you need via the truth as you read it with an open heart.

Finally, I implore you to put the truth you learn in this book into action. Don't self-sabotage by being just a reader and thinker than a doer. Be a doer, and your life will be better for it. If you're ready, then keep reading!
God bless you!

PART I

THE ORIGIN OF CURSES

1

CURSES AND THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE

IN DISCOVERING the truth, I'm irresistibly drawn to beginnings. And, if we are to discover the truth even under the title of this book, we must be willing to start at the very beginning – the one Scriptures provide us. So, what is this beginning I write of?

The Genesis Account

Well, for starters, we need to know who first pronounced a curse and how curses became linked with the human experience. For an answer, we have to turn to Genesis chapters 2 and 3 that contain the events of the fall of man. These Scriptures reveal what life was like for man after he had been created and made a living soul by God.

We're informed that God of His own volition planted a garden eastward in Eden: and there He put the man whom He had formed. The Garden wasn't just home for Adam, it was also home for the trees God made to grow there: trees that were pleasant to the sight, and good for food, even trees that were not

going to be for eating, like the tree of life, also in the midst of the garden. There was also the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The garden had its own irrigation; there was a river that went out of Eden to water the garden.

So man had a home and food to eat. Man also had an assigned task, as God gave man the duty of dressing and keeping the garden of Eden. He would also be responsible for naming the other living creatures: beasts and fowls alike that God had formed out of the ground. God didn't fail to instruct man about what was available but wasn't for eating; the tree of knowledge of good and evil (we would later learn that the tree of life also) wasn't for eating; if Adam ate of it, God warned, that very day he will surely die.

Afterwards God thought to Himself that man needed a companion and a help meet; straightway, He took on the responsibility of providing him with one. He caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and formed a woman from one of his ribs, and presented her to him. Adam, I believe, kept her up to date on everything, including God's ban on a specific tree.

One word that describes man's life before the fall and before there was the mention of a curse was **ease – freedom from pain or discomfort, cares, hard labour and difficulty**. He didn't worry about where to live; it was provided by God. He didn't worry about what to eat; it was provided by God, and

wasn't even limited to the trees in the garden where he lived (Genesis 1:29). He didn't worry about what his purpose was, besides from being commissioned to procreate and have dominion (Genesis 1:28); God revealed his assigned task as gardener to him, which in turn revealed his abilities.

He didn't have to be alone either; not only did he enjoy God's presence, he was gifted a female companion and help meet by God. And though man seemed to appear vulnerable, he wasn't, nor was his wife. They had God in their corner for protection. Indeed, life was easy for man and woman. But it wasn't to be for long.

A Strange Intruder

Everything changed when the Serpent (who was really Lucifer, a rebellious, fallen angel fated for destruction, see Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:11-19) entered Adam's perfect world. The devious one then succeeded in deceiving the woman, leading her to sin – the sin of disobedience, and she in turn made her husband sin too. They heeded Lucifer's voice and ate of the fruit of the tree God explicitly commanded man not to eat of, the one He warned that if the man (or woman) ate would lead to death.

After the deed was done, God arrived on the scene to see what man had done. Apart from a missing fruit from the forbidden tree, the man and the woman having a strange reaction to His presence

and call, and the presence of a talking serpent, everything else seemed normal. After some questioning, God found all three: the Serpent, the woman and the man guilty, and thereafter pronounced His judgment on all three of them.

Curse on the Serpent

To the Serpent, God said: *“Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”*

This pronouncement by God was negative. It was judgment and a curse – intended to inflict punishment upon the serpent, and would be so because God’s word was potent enough to make things happen, as we’ve already seen in creation. The curse in operation meant, physically the serpent now ranked low compared to all the cattle and beasts of the field. It also meant that it would from that moment onward **slither**, something it wasn’t accustomed to before, and would henceforth be a part of its life experience. And since this was a curse, we can assume this change in its form of movement wouldn’t be enjoyable.

The slithering was just one; also as a result of God’s declaration the affinity and alliance the serpent

shared with the woman briefly would from that moment become a thing of the past. The new normal would be enmity between the two, physically and eventually even spiritually. Till date, most humans shudder at the sight of snakes, whether big or small, whether in its maturity or infancy, and detest them naturally. And when snakes attack, the heel of humans (i.e., a vulnerable point) is a vantage point to inflict injury, just as bruising the head of snakes (i.e., the upper division of its body) is the usual target of humans.

But God's words are weightier than that, and carry a deeper meaning. God in that moment was also declaring the nature of the future relationship of Lucifer and his spawns with humans, especially those who choose to be on God's side, it would be enmity. Hostility. Till date, Lucifer, demons and humans who are bonded with him are the opponents of all God's children far and wide, young and old; they tempt God's children using our weaknesses and persecute us; and we wage spiritual war against their head, Lucifer, and win. We're able to do this because Jesus, the ultimate Seed of the woman made it possible via His life, death and resurrection.

On the Woman Too

Next up in the Genesis 3 curses is the woman. God says, *"I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children;*

and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.” As you can see, as a result of her disobedience, God’s pronouncement ushers in a new normal for her as well, a negative one at that.

The words God spoke to her reveals that sorrow/pain that had never been a part of her life experience would now be. For instance, whenever it came time for her to bring forth after conception, it would be accompanied with a great degree of pain. This makes us see that childbearing was originally intended by God to be a pain-free process for Eve, and women in general. Also, as regards her relationship with her husband, there would now be someone in authority, who would lead/guide; this would be the man, and this was to be the new order.

This also gives us a sense that the original intent of God was for Adam and his wife to be equals, but the woman had forfeited that by her action in leading her husband to sin. So going forward, a woman will desire marriage, even to have a husband, and the man she’d marry would rule over her.

Curse on the Man

On the man God pronounces, “...*Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt*

eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

God’s pronouncement ushers in a new normal for Adam as well; and it would affect his life’s work as a gardener/farmer, if you will. The ground is now cursed for the purpose of Adam’s punishment. Reaping/eating was to be preceded by toiling (long, strenuous fatiguing labour) all through the length of his life. He would also get an unexpected harvest of thorns and thistles – a painfully disappointing outcome after labour (from time to time); then he could turn to eat the herb of the field.

Since prior to his disobedience Adam didn’t exert his strength (i.e., make physical and mental effort) before he could eat, going forward he would exert his strength – labour – before he can eat; and this was to be a perpetual decree all the days of his life till he dies.

Then came the final pronouncement: death. Death was to be part of the human experience, beginning with Adam, though he didn’t die physically that same hour he sinned, he did die spiritually. And when he eventually died at 930 years – 70 years short of a full day (see 2 Peter 3:8) – he was buried in the ground from where God took dust to create him in the beginning. This too helps us see

that death wasn't part of God's original plan for humans, but it now is.

Paradise Lost

One more consequence of their sin of disobedience was that Adam and woman, later named Eve forfeited their home, the Garden of Eden. After clothing them properly, God sent Adam and his wife Eve from the garden, to where they would now begin to operate under **a new normal characterized by the absence of ease**. And, in case they tried to sneak back into the garden, God placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

Now that we have come to the end of the origin of curses, we now know that the first curse on humanity was pronounced by God; and it was all the result of the sin of the first humans. The pronouncement made by God, whether directly or indirectly, brought an end to the old order in some aspects of Adam and Eve's life, even the serpent's; and it ushered in a different and not so pleasant new beginning. This too was done by God as a means of punishing the guilty. You can also read about Cain's curse (Genesis 4:1-16). But just because curses began with God doesn't mean it ended with Him. Humans curse too, but not as God approves.

2 WHEN HUMANS PRONOUNCE CURSES

HUMANS PRONOUNCED curses too. I'm sure there's no surprise there! And instances of human curses are scattered throughout Scripture, the Old Testament in particular. There's the case of Noah cursing his grandson Canaan for his father Ham's sin against him, subjecting the child to servitude (Genesis 9:25-27). Rebekah volunteered to take on any curse that might come upon her son Jacob for his sin which she masterminded (Genesis 27:13).

In his case, Jacob unknowingly cursed Rachel, his beloved wife, with death for taking her father Laban's household gods (Genesis 31:32). He also uttered negative pronouncements upon his sons: Simeon and Levi for their role in the male massacre in Shechem (Genesis 49:5-7). He did so too on his son Reuben for laying with his concubine Bilhah (Genesis 49:3-4). Then, there's Moses who pronounced curses in advance that would befall the Israelites should they choose to disobey God's law (Deuteronomy 27:9-26; 28:15-end). There's also Joshua's curses on Jericho. Many other examples are

in Scripture, but let's look into Joshua's curse on Jericho briefly.

Joshua's Curse on Jericho

The account of Joshua cursing Jericho is in Joshua 6; but unlike the previous examples cited, this one appears almost to be unprovoked. At surface level it would seem as though Jericho and its inhabitants were just existing, minding their business when Joshua and the Israelites decided to come up against them to destroy them and their city and plunder it; but, like I earlier mentioned, it only seemed that way. It really wasn't so.

From the beginning of that chapter God had informed Joshua that He had given into his hand Jericho, with its king and the mighty men of valour. He then gave Joshua an unusual strategy by which he could conquer the city! In the same Joshua 6, we're to see how Joshua follows God's instruction to the letter; and just before Joshua and his people would take the city, Joshua gives the people stern instructions; he calls the city accursed, which could mean it was already under a curse or, better still, doomed.

But not just the city; all that was in it in the eyes of God were cursed too. The incoming Israelites were to keep themselves from the things in the city. By this Joshua meant they were not to keep any of the things in it for themselves. The danger of doing that is to

become cursed themselves along with their camp – and that would spell trouble for them all. Whatever silver, gold, vessels of brass and iron they encountered were to be consecrated unto the Lord and kept in the treasury of the Lord, and then after utterly destroy all that was in the city, human and animal alike, with the exception of Rahab and her family because of the kindness she had shown the spies Joshua had earlier sent into the city.

Joshua at the end of it all, in the presence of the people, pronounced an indirect curse on Jericho. Joshua's curse in summary is best understood as an embargo, a ban like most curses really, but in this case against the rebuilding of Jericho. The man who attempted to rebuild it would be cursed before the Lord. At the cost of his firstborn will the foundation be laid and at the cost of his youngest son will he set up the gates.

A long while after, as is recorded in Scriptures, 1 Kings 16:34 precisely, Joshua's curse became a man named Hiel's reality. He built Jericho but paid the price. In what manner he lost his sons is not revealed, but he lost his sons as Joshua had pronounced. So far, we now know that **curses can be described, and manifest in a person's life as either an end of ease, an embargo, and even death. Sometimes, it could even be all of the above.**

Not without a Cause

I'm sure someone is wondering how ordinary humans like Noah, Jacob, Moses and Joshua could make negative pronouncements and they would come to pass. Well, it's simple. These men: Noah, Jacob, Moses and Joshua were all figures of authority; but that's not really why they pronounced curses/negative utterances which stood. I strongly believe that it is because God, in His wisdom, permitted their utterances to stand. In Lamentations 3:37, the prophet Jeremiah rightly says: *"Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?"*

This automatically helps us bring into proper perspective who the ultimate authority is at the end of the day. But, it also forces us to think upon the reason why God, who doesn't find pleasure in wrong doing and evil, would permit negative things, even negative utterances, to stand. Are you wondering why yet? It's simple really. We only have to go back to the origin of curses to see that without a cause, a curse really can't stand.

Ham was guilty, so was Rachel, Simeon, Levi, and Reuben too. As for Jericho and its inhabitants, they were guilty as well of abominable practices, e.g., idolatry, in the sight of God as did other Canaanite nations (Deuteronomy 7:1-11). God permitted the curses on them all, in my opinion, for at least three reasons: the first is that the curses had legal grounds,

i.e., a cause. Second, discipline/punishment has been known to help us humans find our way to the point of remorse and repentance. Then there's also the fact that as many as refuse to be remorseful and repentant, their judgment would end up serving as deterrent for others. And that would have been the case of the people of Nineveh had they not repented.

The story of the Ninevites is found in Jonah 1:1-2 and 3:1-10. On a random day, the people of Nineveh, while going about their businesses, see a stranger enter the city and uttering negative words – predicting their downfall, even giving a set time for the fulfilment of his prediction: forty days from that day. They don't know anything about the man or what/who is inspiring his words or who's backing him. But he looked and sounded serious and they couldn't ignore him. Well, not him, they couldn't ignore his words; they were scary.

I presume panic gripped the entire city. He was pronouncing and predicting imminent war, their defeat and destruction. If it was to get their attention, he sure got it. Not only the people's, but the king's as well. But, though all they saw was a strange man uttering "curses," Jonah's got God's full backing. The people were evil and violent. They were guilty and ripe for judgment by God's assessment, and all Jonah's "curses" were going to happen as predicted!

But here's where things get interesting; the people believed God through Jonah's words. The "curse" got

them thinking right and acting right straightaway! They all abstained from food and water, put on sackcloth as an outward show of remorse and repentance, from the greatest to the least of them. Their king wasn't left out; he arose from his throne and removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes; he also joined the fast. In fact, he was the one who made the fast a law, ordered the people to wear sackcloth and cry out to God (for mercy) while turning away from their evil and violent ways in hope that God would indeed have mercy on them.

The Ninevites cried out to God and genuinely turned from their wicked ways. And God who is the ultimate authority did what? Just as they hoped, He observed them, decided they were being genuinely repentant, then turned away from His fierce anger and decided against what He had originally planned to do against them.

I shared that example so we can know that though God permits curses with causes, in the case of a turnaround like we've seen and will yet explore later in the book, or even in the case of other conditions we will yet mention, God can change His mind and overturn a verdict/judgment/curse. He can stop the fulfilment of a curse with a cause before it becomes operational or even when operational.

3 WHEN CURSES TAKE EFFECT

WHETHER IT'S God that pronounces a curse, or it's a human that pronounces a curse that God permits to stand, the effects are never pretty. The event I'm about to share from Scripture gives us a visual example of a curse taking effect. It's recorded in Joshua 9.

Tale of the Gibeonites

Gibeon was a great city; it was as one of the royal cities. All its men were mighty warriors; yet, after they heard of all Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, instead of forming an alliance with the Hittites, the Amorites, and Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, these great and mighty nations who had already formed a military alliance in order to fight against Joshua and the children of Israel, they opted for a peace treaty with Israel and went as far as obtaining it, even though by trickery.

The Gibeonites did their findings well, and had discovered Joshua and the children of Israel had been given all of Canaan – comprising of the

aforementioned nations – for their inheritance and had been commanded by God to destroy all the inhabitants of these lands. They deduced that Israel wouldn't enter a treaty with them because of this, and so came up with a plan. A select few of them, most likely their mighty men, were the ones to carry out the plan.

Before approaching Joshua at the camp at Gilgal, they altered their appearance and made it look like they were ambassadors worn out with their possessions from a long journey. When they gained Joshua's audience, they lied to him about being from a far country and asked him to make a league with them. Somehow, they also knew that the Lord had permitted peace treaties with nations that were far away from the Israelites. The men of Israel weren't fully convinced despite their appearance and their words and wondered if they were from a nearby country; but the Gibeonites eventually convinced Joshua with their false humility and lies about being from a far country. They pretended about knowing nothing of Joshua's recent exploits in Jericho and Ai.

With evidence of their dry and mouldy bread and old wine bottles, even their old garments and shoes, their tale appeared believable. Joshua and his men eventually shared a meal with them signifying they had entered a peace treaty with them – this meant they would let them live. I wish Joshua and his men had at this point sought God's counsel! But they

didn't, trusting instead in the plausibility of the tale by the strangers, with whom they now swore an oath of alliance. It was three days after that Joshua and his men would discover that they had been deceived.

A Curse on the Gibeonites

And this is where we are going. Joshua upon his discovery of the Gibeonites' deceit, went alongside his men to their cities, but not to kill them – they had already sworn an oath to let them live. Again, without consulting with God, the princes of Israel decided they were going to reduce the Gibeonites to slaves instead – they would make them hewers of wood and drawers of water!

When Joshua called for them and spoke to them, after questioning them, he pronounces a curse on them! Now please pay attention to what Joshua says to them in Joshua 9:23. *“Now therefore ye are cursed, and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God.”* Though the Gibeonites gave their explanation – if to mellow the consequence of their exposure – what's said is said. And, better to live miserly as slaves than perish, the Gibeonites agree to all Joshua pronounced against them. In the end, they don't lose their lives but lost other things.

Now let's unpack Joshua's curse on the Gibeonites. Going forward, the Gibeonites were no longer free (not subject to control by others) as they

once were. They were not physically restrained, i.e., in chains; but they were now captives, lawful captives, and subject to Joshua and the children of Israel (i.e., under their authority or control). And we know Joshua's pronouncement had legal grounds to stand, and permitted by God to take effect because the Gibeonites were guilty of deception.

Let's take for instance their mighty men/warriors who, despite their bravery, skill, weapons, were now **reduced** to hewers of wood and drawers of water! The imperative word here is "**reduce**". When we delved into Adam and Eve's sin and its consequences, we saw that a "curse" in effect meant an end of ease and an introduction of hardship/pain into their individual lives; the same effect we observe in the curse put on the builder of Jericho; it too meant loss – the rebuilder would lose at least two sons. For the people of Nineveh, it would have meant death. Then, in the case of the Gibeonites, we are allowed to see what else a curse in effect looks like.

As for me, I see a people living but not free, capable of great exploits but reduced to slaves. I see shame and humiliation when there ought to be confidence and glory. I see subservience instead of independence. I see wasted resources despite its availability and the knowledge of what to do with it. I see **limitations**. I see **retrogression, stagnation, even going round in circles** where there ought to be progression. I see **hard labour for another to**

benefit but not for themselves. I see an **absence of fulfilment** but the presence of **toil, frustration, regret and weariness**. I even see envy, anger and hidden resentment instead of contentment, peace and joy. And finally, I see a desire for freedom, and rest.

Now tell me what do you see? Not only when you reflect on the curse on the Gibeonites, but also when you observe your family, life? Do any of the things listed describe your life's experience? When curses take effect it's never pretty, neither is it enjoyable; it's all of the aforementioned and more, and sometimes it even results in death. It spells hopelessness. But, believe me, when God is interested in a case and steps in, there's really no such thing as a hopeless situation. If, as their case was to become, there was eventually a way out for the Gibeonites from their servitude, tell me why wouldn't there be a way out for you?

4 THE DEBT-COLLECTOR

WHEN CURSES begin to take effect, the debt-collector, Lucifer has swung into action. The debtor is the sinner (guilty party), the debt is the sin, the payment means being subjected to various harsh realities in one or many areas of life. Let me explain more.

A Satanic Agenda

From what's revealed in Scriptures, the originator of sin is Lucifer, aka the Tempter, Deceiver, Adversary of man, Satan, the Devil. Not only did he commit the first sin against God while in heaven, but like we already know, he made sure to lead Eve and Adam into sin while disguised as a serpent. Though he is fated for destruction, before his time is up and while still here on earth, he goes to and fro in the earth, walking up and down in it like a roaring lion looking for preys – non-believers and Believers alike, those whom he would deceive and tempt to sin and eventually have legal grounds to torment on earth

and in hell as they share in his fate for all of eternity – provided they remain sinners.

Well, after Satan successfully leads a person into sin, especially if this person is a Christian/Believer, he proceeds to take on the role of their accuser. Perhaps this doesn't happen all the time, but I believe in some, if not all, instances he does go before God to charge whomever he has successfully led into sin, of an offense or crime, and then seeks permission for himself and his demons to go ahead to collect the debt owed, i.e., torment the person in various areas of their lives.

Sin, like I've reiterated, is legal grounds for Satan and his demons to take one captive and do to one as they will. Same with curses with causes, the cursed becomes a captive, a lawful captive; and then Satan, when permitted, enslaves the captive and begins to subject them to his dictates while making a full mess of their lives, and sometimes even their children's lives and children's children's lives; and he doesn't stop except there's a divine interference/intervention.

An Inherited Bondage

Yes, sometimes it's not direct sin that leads one into satanic captivity and opens one up to satanic oppression; sometimes, it's inherited sins – an inherited debt. So you find yourself enduring the consequences of sin expressing itself in various areas of your life. In early Bible times, children and

generations after were subjected to the consequences of their parents'/ancestors' sins (Exodus 34:7). But subsequently, God announced that individuals would be held responsible for their own sins and suffer the consequences; and children/ generations after will no longer be held accountable (Ezekiel 18:20). Yet generational consequences persist. Why is this?

I have at least two reasons why this happens; the first is that some children carry on the sinful legacies of their parents/ancestors. If you repeat your parents' patterns of sin, you will suffer the consequences as they did, or in a different manner, but you suffer nonetheless for their sins in addition to the punishment for your personal sins.

The second is that some children don't know their rights. For instance, a child who is now a Believer who had sinful parents/ancestors must understand that as a child of God who not only believes in Jesus' sacrifice (His death and resurrection) but now walks in righteousness – meaning, does not repeat nor take any delight in the sins of his/her parents – now has the right to refuse satanic oppression. And God will back them up.

Writing from personal experience, I believe strongly that if you don't know your true identity in Christ, and exercise your rights as a child of God and fight from the place of victory that Jesus has won for us, except for the mercies of God, certain negative

patterns of oppression will persist in your life. Satan doesn't care about what you deem to be fair or unfair behaviour. We'll look into this more closely as we proceed.

Now that we've covered all these however, it's important that in Part II of this book we explore curses that humans pronounce, with and without causes, whilst seeking out evil spirits to help them enforce a said curse. Then we'll also see what God's role is in these instances for His dear children.

PART II

HUMAN CURSES, CAUSES AND CLAUSES

5

HUMAN CURSES VERSUS GOD'S INTERVENTION

SO FAR we've covered some aspects of curses. We've touched on how curses with causes originated and became linked with the human experience, about humans cursing, what a curse with a cause in effect looks like, and even about the identity of the debt-collector and his role in curses. However, we are yet to talk about when humans curse, not just by uttering negative words alone, but when they do so and go the extra mile to make sure it happens, whether the curse is with a cause or without a cause.

So, for this chapter of the book, I'd like to take us on a journey. We would be drawing inspiration from the Old Testament, an event recorded in Numbers chapters 22-24. Though it's an event from ancient time, it'll help us in our understanding of modern day cursing, and why people have come to dread it; that and so much more. Let's get right into it.

An Aggrieved Party

Going by the information in Scriptures, and even judging by everyday life occurrences, you'd agree

with me that for a curse to be in existence and become part of anyone's experience, there must be first and foremost an aggrieved party.

When we explored curses with causes previously, we saw that God had been disobeyed, His command disregarded, and the result had been a curse, either directly or indirectly. When Noah cursed Canaan, or Jacob cursed his sons Reuben, Simeon and Levi, and even when Joshua cursed the Gibeonites, these men had all felt wronged. The general idea is that for a curse to exist and become part of anyone's life story, there is always someone who feels wronged.

But now, there's the curious case of Balak, the king of the Moabites, who noticed that a people had pitched their tents in the plains of Moab. From his findings, he had learned not only that they were Israelites, but also of their achievement in respect to their campaign against their opponents – the Amorites. He and his people became terrified of the Israelites, mainly because of their sheer number – they were so many.

Beyond just being afraid, all the Moabites began to feel distressed (troubled, disturbed). Balak, in particular, began to feel threatened, not wanting to be defeated should the Israelites come upon him, even though Israel had no such intention to move against Moab. Yet, Balak the king of Moab decided to reach out to the elders of Midian with his concerns for himself, his nation, and the Midianites too. He

painted the Israelites as their common enemy, with hopes for an alliance against Israel.

Next, he sends messengers – the elders of Moab and Midian – to Balaam the Son of Beor – a soothsayer of sort, though called a prophet – who he would ask to help him curse the Israelites. **This curse would be a way to ensure the Israelite's defeat and his victory** when he fought against them eventually.

Now we see that even when people aren't wronged, they curse, even enlist others to join and help them. Sometimes it's about how they see you, as a rival or opponent, or it's about what they've seen you achieve. It could also be about how you make them feel, even if it's unknowingly. They compare themselves to you and feel less, and are triggered by envy. Other times, they are distressed by your existence, achievement and close proximity to them. There are times people just feel threatened by you even when all you're doing is living life and minding your business.

These aren't justifiable reasons for people to curse others, not as if there's any justifiable reason to curse anyone anyway. Yet, to the people who curse, just like Balak, if you asked him why he was willing to go that far, he'd say he had a very valid reason even though he hadn't been treated unfairly or wronged in any way. Anyway, the aggrieved party is one part of two; the other is the target.

The Target

The target is usually the person whom a curse is directed at. Again, like we've previously explored in curses with causes, often times the targets of curses are guilty because they've done something wrong; but then there are cases where a target is completely innocent of any wrong, like in the case of the Israelites, who were simply existing. They had pitched their tents in the plains of Moab, east of Jordan opposite Jericho – this would be a temporary arrangement. But unknown to them, just by being within view and because of all that they had achieved, their dread had fallen on the Moabites, and by extension the Midianites, and they had earned themselves an enemy in Balak especially, and had been singled out by him to be attacked, not just physically eventually but spiritually and verbally via a curse. That's exactly the same way many have found themselves as targets for no known reason and no just cause.

Believers and non-believers alike, it's true you're just living life and minding your business, but I hope you know that for trouble to come knocking on your door, you don't always have to go calling on it. The Israelites became a target unknowing to them; the same way many are targets. And just as Balak sought to do, the envious and vengeful party always seek out the help of a false prophet or diviner to carry out their diabolic acts.

The False Diviner

It's true, life is not a movie; but believe me when I say many movies are inspired by real life events. Seeking out another party to curse one's enemy seems like a scene from a typical Nollywood/Hollywood movie. But I tell you, it happened first in real life before screenwriters were ever inspired to do so in movies. Balak had appointed himself the opponent of the Israelites, and had not only sought Midian's alliance against Israel, he had taken it a step further by sending out messengers to Balaam, a soothsayer, to come over to curse Israel.

Going by the rule of first mention, which is what you'd read about him in Numbers chapters 22-24, who would blame you if you start out thinking of Balaam as a true prophet of God. But, if you continue to read through Scriptures, you'd eventually come to the same conclusion that I have, that Balaam was nothing more than a false prophet with a false religion.

Balaam was the son of Beor and resident at Pethor. In the invitation sent to him, Balak tells Balaam his target was a people who had come out of Egypt. He describes how he views their populace, and even adds how Israel had pitched their tents opposite him. None of those was enough reason for a curse; so he proceeds to reveal the heart of the matter. He needs them cursed because they appear too mighty for him. Please note that this conclusion

he came to simply by observation. He needed the Israelites cursed so he could be at an advantage and prevail over them in battle and be able to smite them. His aim was to drive Israel out of the land. So, he wraps up his plea with a little flattery that had some element of truth.

You see, the false prophets people seek out in order to make a curse effective against their targets always seem to hold some degree of power – even if their source is not God but devils. They always have some knowledge of the supernatural, and are known to be able to make certain things happen, like in the case of Balaam, who was regarded to be able to make utterances that manifest in the lives of people, whether it was good or bad. And he seemed to have lived up to that reputation.

Many such self-acclaimed prophets are furnished with information about the target by the aggrieved party, including what they hope to achieve via the curse, not forgetting that many times, like in the case of Balak versus the Israelites, the aggrieved have no valid offense/wrong/hurt to accuse their target of. Yet, whether there is an offence/wrong/hurt or not, a false prophet will proceed to carry out their evil enterprise. Their only motivation is reward of divination.

Reward of Divination

Scriptures reveal to us that when the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed to go meet Balaam, they took with them the rewards of divination. By this we know that Balaam had a reputation – one which he had built over time – that his clientele included kings and elders of nations, which made him a somewhat “credible” bigshot false prophet. But that’s not where I’m going.

What I want us to see is that there was a way of doing things when visiting prophet Balaam. His clients knew it. They had to come with his rewards – it wasn’t going to be for free but for a fee. Some might argue and say it was customary to go to see prophets with gifts; but that wouldn’t apply in this case, especially when what Balaam was sought out to do was unrighteousness! He was being hired to curse – something I believe he had done to some other persons/nations prior to this time and succeeded at!

What the emissaries took along wasn’t a gift to honour a man of God, this was payment for evil services to be rendered, or as Peter calls it in 2 Peter 2:15, it was the wages of unrighteousness, revealing something Balaam loved and required for his services – gain. This could be money, position, resources etc!

That being said, at least now we know that people that seek out these false prophets usually do so fully committed to paying the price, sometimes, like in the case of Balak, it would be some huge price; and

like in other cases, even some I have personally heard about here in Nigeria, it's for a small ridiculous fee. Either way, a price is paid. But that's not all you must know. Even in these cases, there's still a higher power who must give permission or withhold it when these prophets seek to cause havoc via their utterances and with the aid of evil spirits, this higher power is God Himself.

God Almighty

There is a reason why one of God's titles is Almighty. Yes, and it's because He has complete power; but it's also because He has supreme power! Being the most powerful, like I've mentioned even in the first chapter of this book, means He gets to decide what happens and what doesn't happen, even if our free will can sometimes put us in a situation where we are at the receiving end of something negative.

Anyway, even in cases such as this when people seek out false prophets/diviners in order to curse someone, whether it's with a cause or without a cause, God still has the ultimate option of either allowing it to stand or not, regardless of who the aggrieved party is and their status. Even in the presence of a gifted false prophet/diviner, and their rewards of divination etc, God still has the final say.

In the case of Balak versus the children of Israel, we are able to see how God exercises this power of His. He intervenes on behalf of His people who were

innocent. Please, let's note two keywords here: they were God's people, and were innocent – by all moral grounds and from God's view.

God's people/children were guiltless and yet picked on to be cursed by a devious mob. God forbid! So, God made it His responsibility to interfere and intervene on their behalf. And that divine interference/intervention began that very day that the emissaries informed Balaam of their desire to enlist his help in cursing the Israelites. Later at night God communicated with Balaam. Ample time, if you ask me, seeing that Balaam had not rejected outright the emissaries' invitation and reward, but had for some reason stalled, and even claimed he wanted to seek the "Lord's" word on the matter.

The delay in jumping at the offer and reward could be tactics to get more reward from the emissaries, as they sought to persuade him. Tell me, why would a true prophet of God even need to seek God first before realizing that all of this was one wrong act? Wasn't it obvious enough? Cursing people for gain! Any child of God, let alone a true prophet of God, would know this wouldn't please God, and so would reject the offer and reward outright. Anyway, let's move on.

Divine Intervention 1:

“Thou Shalt Not Go, Thou Shalt Not Curse!”

While I’m certain Balaam was gifted and often had spiritual encounters, I believe his gifts and spiritual power weren’t from God but more likely from evil spirits (that easily disguise as angels of light). Those devious spirits were the ones that commissioned him and for whom he truly worked. This time around, however, Balaam is privileged to encounter God Almighty (at least His voice); and God has come not to fellowship with him but with the singular aim of preventing a wrong that was intended to happen by reason of a command that He will give.

During the course of the encounter, God interrogates Balaam, who answers truthfully. Again I wonder how, when he spoke, he doesn’t discern the absurdity of the mission he’s been presented, especially if he was truly a prophet of God. Anyways, I’m digressing. Back to the matter.

Since Balaam couldn’t discern the absurdity of the mission, God makes it plain for him, and commands him not to go with the emissaries, and not to curse the Israelites! Why? Because, they are blessed people! It’s as simple as that. Afterwards, God left. Indeed, the Israelites were blessed; they were blessed, for God had set them apart from other nations as His people and through Him they had been able to prosper, enjoy peace and happiness amongst other blessings.

Their blessedness meant cursing them would be futility should Balaam dare to proceed.

After the encounter, Balaam rose up in the morning and told the princes of Balak to return to their land that the Lord hadn't permitted him to go with them. And they left, but they only retreated for a while; for soon, Balak sends more, and more honourable princes with a bigger offer as reward for his services.

Divine Intervention 2:

“Go! But You Must Obey Me!”

When the “more honourable” princes met up with Balaam, they presented him with a mouth-watering offer – for they knew what his heart craved! They offered him a promotion to an honourable position, even a blank cheque – he could ask for whatever he wanted and desperate Balak would do it! All he had to do was come along and curse the Israelites.

Here is where it gets interesting, for although Balaam vehemently refuses to go with them, saying in many words that even if he got a bigger offer he wouldn't go, his words reveal the presence of greed in his heart! He mentions a house full of silver and gold! Was that how far he would have bargained? Was that what he would have asked the king for if God hadn't intervened initially? Anyways, we must applaud him for at least trying to set aside his heart's desires in

order to honour God's command even if he wasn't completely sold out to God's will.

I write this because when we would expect Balaam to send the men off, again he lets them tarry with him that night and says he wants to know, or better put, confirm if God had changed His mind on the matter and would now permit him to go.

God does show up again; but this time, like previously, not to fellowship with Balaam but to continue to give instruction as part of an ongoing conversation, which in the big picture was His intent on preventing a wrong from happening. When God shows up, He permits Balaam to go with the emissaries on the condition that it was His words, i.e., God's word that he must obey! Did Balaam go? Sure, he did.

Did you notice that Balaam that had been previously on the side of evil doers was now someone who complied with God's order? Let's keep in mind that God has authority over all, even gifted prophets; and as we will soon see, even kings with untold wealth and strong alliances must bow to Him! And He won't hesitate to exercise His authority when it concerns the well-being of His people, especially when they are innocent or have become recently converted. But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's read about what happens next.

Divine Intervention 3:

“Go! But You Must Only Speak What I Speak!”

So Balaam gets up in the morning, saddles his ass and sets out with the princes of Moab. He also takes along two of his servants. But we are told God’s anger is kindled against Balaam because he went. Now that might seem a bit confusing. Didn’t God just say he could go?

Well, it stops being confusing when you remember that God searches the heart. I believe even though Balaam had told God that he would only do as He says, it was obvious that he said it but didn’t really mean what he had said. I, being a spectator, would have wondered why even though Balaam went with the men he doesn’t even inform them that he wasn’t going to collect a fee and that he was going to do as God bids him regardless. Did you wonder about that too?

Maybe he was hoping that later on, he could still find a way around to get some dough for himself, even if it was at the expense of the children of Israel. Whatever the contents of his heart were, God knew it, and wasn’t pleased with it. So, He sent an angel – who acted as an adversary for Balaam in his journey. This particular angel, many Bible scholars believe, was the pre-incarnate Christ, the second Person in the God-head. Amazing, huh?

Unfortunately for Balaam, he can’t immediately see the angel with a drawn sword in hand standing

on his way; instead, it is his ass (donkey) who sees Him. Of course the ass is spooked and tries to flee, leaving the way and going into the field, but making Balaam upset, leading him to strike her so she'd turn back to the road. The angel stands on the way at least twice more until the ass could neither turn right or left, but fall under Balaam, making him even more upset. This time again, like in the two previous instances, Balaam smote the ass; but his desire, should he have a sword, would have been to kill the hapless animal.

God then opens the mouth of the ass – this is a miracle, by the way! He lets her talk, and she questions her master and defends her actions. Shockingly, Balaam shows no surprise at the animal talking like a human, but responds to her as though it was their natural way of communication. Yes, they have a full blown conversation! It's funny how the miracle of the talking ass doesn't direct Balaam's attention to God.

Well, God eventually opens the eyes of Balaam and he sees the angel of the Lord that had been standing on his way for a while now with a sword drawn in his hand. Then, he bows and falls flat on his face. A posture of worship. And since the angel receives the worship, Bible scholars believe this is enough evidence for their conclusion, that it was indeed Jesus.

When the angel speaks, it's however to rebuke Balaam, not only for smiting his ass thrice but also for his perverse way! This supports the assumption that Balaam had with his lips honoured God but not with his heart. He was like his ass in some manner – he had been stubborn and had refused to obey instruction. There was a certain stubbornness about Balaam that although well-hidden, was visible to God.

Balaam was intent on having his way; we just didn't know how he intended to do this. But God knew all these things and wasn't going to tolerate it. And that's why He confronted Balaam, and opposed him. The angel doesn't punish Balaam or hinder him any further. But before he is released to go on his way, He tells him He had come with the aim of slaying him for his disobedience (just like he too had sought to slay his donkey for her disobedience); and if not for the quick thinking of the ass in turning away, he would have been killed, but the ass would have lived. Immediately, Balaam says he had sinned. But, even though he admits his sin, in not knowing of the presence of the angel, he offers to go back home, but the angel tells him to proceed, only this time he must be committed to only saying the words that He speaks to him. And with that Balaam kept moving!

So far we have seen God give a command not to curse, in favour of His children; we have seen God exercise authority over a false prophet hired to curse

His children. Now, we have the privilege of seeing God enforce His command to the false prophet, and even willing to go as far as killing the prophet hired to curse, should he dare disobey Him! You can't be in doubt about how fierce God's love and how far He is willing to go to protect His children, especially the ones He says are blameless.

Under this chapter title, we've touched on the aggrieved party, the target, the role of the false prophet/diviner, the reward of divination and God's role. Yet, there's one important element required that we must absolutely explore: the altars and sacrifices.

Altars and Sacrifices

Balak and Balaam do eventually meet. As soon as Balaam arrived, Balak went out to meet him; but it is their conversation that's of interest to us. Balak wonders why Balaam needed much persuasion before he could come, or did he doubt his ability to promote him to honour? And Balaam replies as if to say, "Well, I'm here, aren't I? But of what good to you will my presence be seeing that I can't even use my power as you'd like? I'm under obligation to speak only what God puts in my mouth to say!"

I'm not sure Balak understood fully what Balaam said; because, next thing he does is proceed to take Balaam to a location – Kirjathhuzoth – which I believe is a worship site for at least one of the local idols of his land which he served; and there Balak

offered oxen and sheep, and sends a portion of the animals offered to Balaam, and to the princes that were with him. Well, Balaam doesn't reject the portion of the meat offered up to idols sent to him by Balak, specifically defining him as unaligned with God who abhors idols. The next thing we read is what happens the next day: Balaam's move to actually issue a curse.

Balaam's First Attempt to Curse

Moving on to the next day, Balak took Balaam, and brought him up into the high places of Baal (a god) so he could see the utmost part (a great number) of the people – the Israelites. And this is where it begins to get interesting.

Balaam begins to reveal to us his methods. He instructs the idolatrous king of Moab to build seven altars and prepare seven oxen (bulls) and seven rams – elaborate, isn't it? When Balak has done all that he was instructed, next, Balak and Balaam offered up on each altar a bullock and a ram. And after that Balaam tells Balak to wait by his burnt offering; he was going to a high place with hopes that the Lord will come to meet him. He assures him he will tell him whatever it is he is shown. Then, he proceeded to a high place.

Now, let's not rush past what we've just read. Balaam has revealed to us like I earlier mentioned his method, which is also the method of false prophets/priests/diviners, even in our time today. One of the

tools their trade employ is **altars and sacrifices**. Altars are raised structures made from clay, wood, stone, iron etc, and dedicated to an idol/god (which really is an evil spirit/demon – 1 Corinthians 10:19-20). They are centres of worship – meeting points between deity and worshippers, places of consultation/communication between deity and worshippers; and they are also centres for rituals – places where offerings/ sacrifices are offered to a deity or deities for different reasons, one of which is to get their support (help) with whatever evil enterprise they were involved in, e.g., cursing others.

Balaam demands in one day that seven altars be erected and at least two animals be sacrificed on each of the altars. These multiple altars and the sacrifices are a pagan practice. Also, the number 7 being symbolic for perfection/completion/totality, implies Balaam was doing his utmost best, even going the extra mile with the multiple altars with hope to achieve the results the king really desires. The twist here is that Balaam is employing this pagan practice with hopes that it would work on God Almighty as it did in the past with evil spirits. How so?!

Anyway, what we now know is that altars, even multiple altars, are employed in cursing others, especially by those who seek the aid of evil spirits (gods) in achieving their goal; and on these altars sacrifices are made – something is given up, or an animal is killed and its blood spilled; all done

alongside or by the false prophet/priest/diviner on behalf of their clients. After the sacrifices on the altar/to the altar, then they attempt to carry out their evil enterprise, e.g., utter their curses, make their enchantments etc.

Did God meet with Balaam at all? Yes, He did. But not because of Balaam's rituals, and definitely not for the reason Balak or Balaam would have hoped; even though as soon as God shows up, Balaam informs Him of his rituals. Well, God doesn't acknowledge his efforts and altars, nor does He acknowledge Balak's burnt offerings. And proof of this is in the word He put in Balaam's mouth – which he was to speak in the hearing of Balak.

When Balaam returns to the king who is standing by his burnt offerings still, and with all the princes of Moab, Balaam took up a parable, the summary of which is: In any manner or way **he (Balaam) couldn't curse whom God hath not cursed! He couldn't defy whom the Lord hath not defied!** As Balaam rightly saw the Israelites, they were a favoured nation that is indeed separate, set apart, not to be counted among the nations. They were also a great number of persons altogether, even a fraction of them was notably large in number. And like he also rightly declared, they were righteous (free from guilt or sin). Balaam ended his parable saying that he hopes his own end would be like theirs.

Balak, the enemy of the Israelites, hears all Balaam was saying, and is understandably livid; he was expecting curses on his enemies but his hired prophet was blessing them. Balaam replies that he couldn't help it. Those weren't his words, they were God's! Beloved, you can agree with me that that's ***Divine Intervention 4***, if you will. Despite multiple altars and sacrifices (burnt offerings) in one day, God appears, not devils; and God makes a greedy false prophet declare that he couldn't curse whom God had not cursed, and couldn't defy i.e., couldn't denounce whom God had not defied. God does indeed disappoint the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise (Job 5:11-16). All their efforts come to nothing!

Balaam's Second Attempt to Curse

But Balak isn't giving up so easily. He believes location is the problem, and a view from another location might help his mission. So I ask, could specific locations aid evil activities? Perhaps. Yet Balak had come to his own conclusion, since his hired prophet, Balaam, doesn't mention anything about a change of location; he already knew their entire enterprise was futile – God was actively opposing them. Nonetheless Balaam agrees to the change of location.

Balak believes a change of location will help Balaam see the Israelites, a less (yet great) fraction of

them, though he wouldn't see them all; then he could try cursing them again! Well, they arrived at the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah; again, seven altars are built and a bullock and a ram offered up as burnt offering on every altar. Again Balaam asks Balak to stand by his burnt offering while he met with the Lord. Does God show up? Yes, He does. Again it has nothing to do with their efforts, altar or rituals; and proof of this is in the message God put in Balaam's mouth that he must declare before Balak – a message that would turn out to be something Balak didn't want to hear at all. When Balaam gets to Balak and the princes of Moab, he took up his second parable the summary of which is: **He (Balaam) had received a commandment from God to bless (Israel); God Himself had blessed (Israel), and Balaam could not reverse it!**

Balaam repeating God's word introduces a quality about God that neither Balak, the princes of Moab and even Balaam knew: God is not a man, and God does not lie (make untrue statements with intent to deceive), neither does He change His mind, especially regarding a matter like this! What He says is what He will do; what He has spoken is what He will fulfil. God had commanded Balaam to bless Israel because He Himself had blessed Israel, and He wouldn't permit Balaam to reverse/revoke it.

But God doesn't only school them about Himself, He tells them how He sees Jacob, Israel; they were to

Him iniquity-free, perverseness-free, so He was with them and shouts of victory was what would be heard in their camp. He even goes on to give them a little history lesson – He was the One who brought them out of Egypt in His superior strength, the same God who is defending them now against enchantments and divination; both of which will fail. In fact, His act in defending them would become a testimony.

Balaam finally ends his second parable by giving Balak a visual of the people he was up against. Israel is described as a great lion rising, in youthful vigour lifting itself, and relentlessly pursuing its prey, overtaking it, killing and devouring it, even drinking its blood. Balak doesn't pay attention to the lessons, not even the warnings the parable held; instead, he tells Balaam since he wouldn't curse them at all, he shouldn't bless them at all. But Balaam again tells him he is simply obeying the Lord's command; he was compelled to obey all God's commands. ***Divine Intervention 5*** is a befitting title for all we've read, right? But, Balak is far from done; he's hell bent on cursing the Israelites; so he tries again!

Balaam's Third Attempt to Curse

Balak, like Pharaoh, was proving himself to be a hardened man, a relentless enemy to the Israelites; because, despite all he was hearing he didn't give up. But he was luckier than Pharaoh, seeing he didn't lose his life in the end.

Balak then urged Balaam to go with him to yet another location – he hoped the next location would prove helpful in their mission – that it might sway God, the defender of the Israelite; and cursing them might become possible. So Balak takes Balaam to the top of Peor, looking toward Jeshimon. And upon Balaam's instruction, seven altars are built that day again and at least a bullock and a ram is sacrificed on each altar. Then after the burnt offerings are lit, Balaam moves away from Balak and the princes of Moab.

But this time around, something's changed. Balaam himself was learning about God and what pleased God; it definitely wasn't curses, not cursing His beloved Israel, but blessing them. So, when he stepped away, he didn't bother seeking for enchantments like he did at other times. Scriptures reveal that he set his face towards the wilderness; and when he lifted up his eyes, he saw Israel abiding in tents according to their tribes.

Then he was privileged enough to experience what I believe was his first time experience of the Spirit of God resting upon him. I'm sure someone's wondering if God's Spirit rests upon unclean vessels. Well, God has a reason for everything He does, even in this rarity. He allows it so that Balaam could be a messenger to Balak. It was a one-time thing even though it could be perpetual if Balaam had gone on

to become truly converted. But sadly he never did (Numbers 31:8,15-16).

When Balaam returns to Balak, he has another parable in his mouth; and when he introduces himself, he says he is the man whose eyes are open. This is best understood as he introduced himself as someone who had been exposed to some new knowledge; for he had heard the words of God and had even recently seen a vision originating from the Almighty (concerning Israel) while he had fallen into a trance.

And what did he see? He really saw Jacob (Israel), how pleasantly attractive their tents and tabernacles are – less in physical appearance but more in spiritual significance. It was a discovery! He saw the extent to which they'd expand, how well positioned they are, how firmly placed they are by the Lord, and how strong and flourishing they've continued to be with the Lord's help.

He was even privy to some other details. For instance, he saw their descendants spreading all over the world; and even an emergence of a great king among them, one higher than Agag, with an exalted kingdom. He also sees God applying the same superior strength He used in bringing Jacob (Israel) out of Egypt to destroy and defeat his enemies. Again, he sees Jacob (Israel) as a crouched lion, even a great lion that no one must dare stir up! Incredible, wouldn't you agree! Imagine too the fact that Balaam

could see all these facts about Israel's true spiritual state/significance and even their future! And in conclusion Balaam says, **“Blessed is he that blesseth thee (Israel), and cursed is he that curseth thee (Israel)!”** And this, in my opinion, is the summary of his message! Let's call this *Divine Intervention 6!*

Balaam was declaring that he now understood that he would be blessed if he blessed Israel, but would be cursed if he cursed Israel. Do you think Balak understood it yet? I think he did eventually and was frustrated. His frustration turned into anger directed at Balaam, insisting that he had been invited to curse his enemies, not to bless Israel these three times!

He then commanded Balaam to leave immediately and return to his abode (before he did something harmful to him). He had originally thought to promote Balaam to great honour but the Lord had kept him back from the said honour. Balaam argued his case stating that he had told Balak's messengers that even if offered a house full of silver and gold, he wouldn't go beyond the commandment of the Lord and do what he willed. Whatever the Lord said was what he must speak. But before Balaam leaves he has one more message to tell Balak. He was going to reveal to him what Israel would do to his people in the future.

Imagine inviting someone to curse your enemies, and not only did they fail in all three attempts, but

end up leaving you with a prophecy of doom. Anyway, let's check out what Balaam reveals; he tells Balak one more new knowledge he had been privy to from the Almighty while in a trance: the future emergence of a person (male) who is preeminent from among Jacob (Israel) and who will possess royal or imperial authority and will attack or afflict Moab and destroy all the children of Sheth. Edom will be dominated, Seir also; and Israel will do valiantly. This descendant of Jacob will have dominion, and exercise it by destroying those that remained (survivors) of the city!

By the time Balaam rounds off and eventually leaves, he also foretells the future of other nations: Amalek, the Kenite, Asshur, and Eber. After which we see Balaam part ways with Balak, not without a trickery we do not immediately see, but revealed later in Numbers 25, and centuries later in the Book of Revelation. More on that later in Chapter 7.

Do you remember what God says about evil alliances? Evil alliances done against His true children – who, like in Israel's case, are blameless – to curse them, even like in this instance, shall of a surety fail! And those that gather together against God's children shall fall for their sakes (Isaiah 54:15), no matter the efforts, diabolical schemes, and despite the persistence of evildoers.

After reading all this, do you still wonder why God took the long route in handling the case of

Balak and Balaam vs the Israelites? Why intervene so much just so a curse won't be pronounced? Why not destroy the offender or curse agent from the onset? Well, I have at least two answers for you. The first is, God perhaps went through the hassle of dealing with both Balaam and Balak individually and collectively in order to give them an encounter – a chance at meeting Him and a chance at being converted after the futility of their enterprise on His account. You do know, don't you, that it is God's desire for all men – regardless of how sinister they are – to be saved, right?

Then there's a second reason, and it's so we can learn from the event. And we have learned quite a lot from it so far. Yet, there's still so much more to learn.

6 SIN AS CAUSES OF CURSES

A CAUSE in the context of a curse is something that brings about an evil effect, or the harmful results desired by the person pronouncing the curse. As seen previously in the curses God pronounces, and even those humans pronounce that take effect even without seeking the aid of evil spirits, sin against God, and wrong done to others in whatever form is a cause for curses, i.e., sin/wrong-doing is sufficient reason for the manifestation of a curse in the life of the guilty/offender. We have also looked into curses humans pronounce with, or specifically without, a cause, for which they seek the aid of evil spirits to activate like Balak sought to do with the help of Balaam. Still on that, let's backtrack a bit to explore something else in Numbers 23.

13 And Balak said unto him, Come, I pray thee, with me unto another place, from whence thou mayest see them: thou shalt see but the utmost part of them, and shalt not see them all: and curse me them from thence.

14 And he brought him into the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar.

15 And he said unto Balak, Stand here by thy burnt offering, while I meet the Lord yonder.

16 And the Lord met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, Go again unto Balak, and say thus.

17 And when he came to him, behold, he stood by his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said unto him, What hath the Lord spoken?

18 And he took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor:

19 God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

20 Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.

21 He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them.

22 God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn.

23 Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel:

according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!

24 Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain.

Please, look very closely at verses 21 through 23. What has become absolutely clear is that, even in the cases of curses humans pronounce with, or like in this case without, a cause, while seeking the aid of evil spirits, a cause was required for the manifestation of the curse. I hope you get it. If there is a cause, there's a huge chance that God will permit it even if the target is one who claims to be a child of God.

In verses 21 through 23, God gives a testimony of Israel's standing. They were iniquity and perverseness free. They were His children yes, but they were also not guilty of any wrong doing in His sight, nor had done anything evil against the Moabites or to Balaam; so, on what grounds should Balaam and Balak be permitted to curse Israel? No grounds, no case! So with or without the aid of evil spirits, curses need a cause, a reason – sin specifically, whether against God or fellow human to be permitted to manifest. Now, this holds different messages for the non-believer and the Believer reading this.

A Plea to the Non-Believer

Iniquity is best understood to mean sin, and sin is going against God's laws. Also, perverseness is best understood to mean turning away from what is right and good; e.g., God's law, and showing a deliberate and obstinate desire to continue to behave in that way in spite of the consequences. This too is a fancy way of describing a sinful lifestyle.

Sin and a sinful lifestyle give access for a curse to become operational in one's life. And, since sin separates one from God, you can't possibly expect God to be an ally with you in situations of a curse pronounced against you. Sin makes you a lawful captive for the "debt-collector". Someone might say, But, what if I didn't sin and it's my grandparents or ancestors that sinned, hence this evil pattern that's manifesting in my family and even in my life?

Well, to this I'd say, true, you might be "innocent" of that sin; but, generally, are you still living in sin? Do you still indulge in a sinful lifestyle? Sin separates one from God and His help; and to close up that gap, you need to give up sin and your sinful lifestyle and embrace Jesus who is the Saviour of all mankind, and who is capable of redeeming you. It's really as simple as that. Until your sins are removed and you are in Christ, you remain vulnerable to any curse caused directly by your forebears, even as far back as Adam.

The summary is this, your ancestors have sinned, yes, and to a large extent you've inherited the consequences of their sins, even though you aren't guilty of that sin. Family ties run deep like that; but you remain a lawful captive, not because you've committed the particular sins of your parents or ancestors, but because you are part of the lineage; also because you're generally a sinner. When God looks at you, He sees sin and a sinful lifestyle; and that separates you from Him, even from the help He could render. The enemy knowing God isn't about to side with you – at least not yet – will continue to perpetrate evil in your life in whichever way or form he likes; that is, until you take the way out that God has provided in Jesus.

Way Out of a Curse

Before Jesus's birth, death and resurrection, God made provisions for mankind to get right with Him. The people of old time depended on their animal sacrifices to take away their sins even though those who did so in Old Testament time never were completely free from the burden of guilt and the consequences of their sins; still they continued to do so even during the time of John the Baptist just before Jesus would begin His public ministry. Aside the sacrifices, some even got baptized in water as an outward way of showing that they had renounced their sins. But from the time of Jesus' arrival on the

scene, especially after His death and resurrection, God has made things more complete and permanent for us through Him.

Let's read two specific Scriptures: John 3:16-19 says, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."* Part of the take away from this first Scripture is that God loves you. Yes, even though you've not been on your best behaviour for a long time now.

God loves you, while hoping that a day will come when you'd be ready for a turnaround from your sinful lifestyle and its painful consequences. He arranged provisions for you so that He could make it happen. And that provision is embodied in the Person of Jesus Christ who is the physical manifestation of God Himself. Jesus Christ, ahead of today of course, came so you could have life, abundant life, everlasting life. Jesus came, suffered, died, was buried and was resurrected so you wouldn't be condemned, i.e., sentenced to perpetually living under a curse while on earth, and sharing in Satan's fate for all of eternity in hell. Jesus died so you could be saved from both horrible realities.

All you have to do first to be free truly is simply to believe in Him – be fully persuaded that all of this is true. Believing in Jesus, in His sacrifice and its potency, goes beyond mindlessly confessing Him as the Son of God and Saviour of the world. It goes beyond acknowledging His suffering, death and resurrection, and merely admitting that He is powerful. It's a very intentional action. It has more to do with your heart than your lips. It's an action you do with your heart.

In your heart you'd recognize Jesus as your Saviour; you'd then put your faith in Him and the potency of His sacrifice, confessing that Jesus is sufficient to save you from all your sins because He really is. You must also confess and denounce your sins and commit to Christ and the life of His Kingdom.

Next is to make Jesus Lord over your life. This means you're willing to submit to Him as you embark on a new life in Him, never returning to your old life and old ways. Are you wondering what next? Well keep reading.

The second Scripture is John 14:6. *“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”* This Scripture, I need to add to dispute what you may have heard or learned or might soon hear or learn in the world. In the world, you'd be told that there are different ways to salvation, and to God, even to halt a curse. But

none of those claims is true; they are lies, and attempting those ways will surely end in futility. There's only one way, just one Name by which you can be saved – JESUS! He is the only way to God. In fact, He's the only way you can receive permanent deliverance and healing from curses of any kind, just ask the woman with the issue of blood (Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:24-34). She did not only receive her deliverance and healing the day she met Jesus, but was assured of the truth of Jesus' power to save even as He gave her a new lease of life!

Now that you know all these, if you haven't already had a private conversation with God, I hope you would go ahead now and do so. I'm not in the habit of giving people certain words to repeat. You've got to talk to God from your heart, and be sure to mean what you say because God is known to search the heart. If you're not being serious, He will know. Declare your new belief and faith in Jesus Christ who bore your sins on the cross (1 Peter 2:21-25; 2 Corinthians 5:21), making atonement for you that it may become possible for you to be redeemed and be reconciled with God (Romans 5:8-11). Don't leave out confessing your sins and seeking God's forgiveness. That, and willingness on your part to make Jesus Lord over your life.

What does this all mean? It means you've come under new management. You've agreed to be a part of God's family, and you're now indeed a part of

God's family and God now takes responsibility for you, including handling the issues of your life, even complex spiritual ones like curses (Matthew 6:33). Henceforth, Jesus' sacrifice has broken the power of curses over our life (Galatians 3:13). Yes, and indeed in order to begin to see the manifestation of this victory in your life, you'd have to continue to abide in Christ (John 15:4); i.e., stay genuinely converted, fellowship with Him daily through prayer and study of God's word, and be willing and obedient in doing all that He bids you, even in prayer (spiritual warfare). Now that you know this and you're a Believer now, let's move on to what you must absolutely also know.

A Word of Caution to the Believer

Is it possible for God to still view iniquity and perverseness in a Believer even after all said and done? The answer is Yes, in the case of a rebellious Believer. Let's remind ourselves of the status of the Israelites. Like modern-day Believers, the Israelites of old believed and served the One True God; yet that wasn't the only reason God prevented the uttering and manifestation of a curse over their lives! The other reason was their standing!

When God viewed their collective at the time of a threat of a curse by Balaam, Israel, according to God, was iniquity and perverseness free! I'm sure someone already gets where I'm going with all this.

For those of us who haven't figured it out yet, it's okay. I'd explain. In simple terms, a Believer that intentionally dips his/her toes in a sea of sin from time to time, or that lounges in a lifestyle of sin, claiming grace, grace will end up sooner than later opening themselves up to different afflictions, even rooted in curses, except the mercies of God rescues him or her.

For the new convert reading this, don't be alarmed but be cautioned. And, for the Believer reading this, and one that falls into this category of easily falling into old sinful habits, be alert and cautioned too, even more, be repentant, and steer clear of whatever easily drags you into sin. Delving in sin and lounging in it means you're self-sabotaging. It means you're in agreement with the debt-collector. It also means you've given him legal grounds to return into your life even after he had been sent packing on the day you turned your life to Christ and became born again. The harm in a life prone to sinning, falling and rising is described quite vividly in an example Jesus gave during one of His lessons – even though He was addressing a different crowd on a different topic. See it in Matthew 12.

43 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.

44 Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.

45 Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

Before I explain, let's read what had happened in verses 26-29.

26 And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?

27 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges.

28 But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

29 Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.

Now from these Scriptures, notice certain things revealed, one of which is Satan, described as a strong man (one with power, might). I had earlier called him debt-collector, but here Jesus describes him as a strong man who has a house where he keeps his spoils. Do you see it? Mind you, this house is not a

physical house, or even a particular location *per se*; it's best understood as spiritual captivity. The idea is that Satan, alongside his cohorts of evil spirits, holds captive certain persons and their possessions.

Next Jesus introduces a stronger man, which is Himself! Do you see that too? Because, of cause, He is more powerful than Satan and demons, and has authority over them. He then goes on to describe His work. Of course, Satan can't offer anyone salvation/deliverance; because, he doesn't have the means. Even if he did, he wouldn't even want to offer it, since it is in his best interest to have people in captivity. It is God who, through Jesus, introduces to the scene of human lives and in the face of humans being held spiritual captives, a stronger man. This stronger man is the all-powerful Jesus who, when we place our faith in, steps into our spiritual captivity, subdues Satan and evil spirits, and then delivers us (former sinners) and our possessions that have been held onto by Satan. Do you understand?

Notice too, delivered people are the Christians/Believers forgiven, made free to live, free to possess our possessions, free to serve God. But, when professing Believers then go ahead to indulge in sin, whether intentionally, occasionally, or habitually, the first Scripture shared describes what the end will look like if such sinning people don't retrace their steps and return to God.

Those who continue in sin despite having come under the new management of Christ, their case would end up badly as that of the unfortunate man described by Jesus. The unfortunate man, like the rebellious Believer, had first been delivered by Jesus from satanic captivity, demonic oppression, affliction of Satan and evil spirits. It means these evil spirits had not only lost their lawful captive and his/her possessions, but in some cases they've also lost their habitat, which expectedly makes them unhappy, nor are they happy walking through dry places. They want back their captive, who also in this case doubles as their host, and to reclaim his/her possession.

So, after roaming for a while, these demons decide to check back to see if they can have their captive back, if they can inhabit their previous host again. The desire to return can be foiled, depending on what they meet when they return. It won't be about what they see, but what they truly know. You can bear the title of Christian/Believer all you like, you can even have an outward form of righteousness and seem to have your life all put together; but if upon observation these demons realize that your life is empty – i.e., void of the Spirit of God whom you should be filled with as a true child of God on account of a sinless life – even if you put up an act, maintain an impression that God is with you, you've automatically given those demons open access to return, yes, despite what Jesus had initially done for

you. Return they will, not like in the previous times, but even worse this time because of the number of them that would return. They would have multiplied, and would wreck greater havoc in your life than before.

Not a pretty picture is it? Which is why it's very important we see sin for what it truly is – a debt that will be collected, an agreement with the enemy that grants access/entry for the enemy! When we see sin for what it truly is, we stop treating it lightly and avoid it.

Am I saying all Believers whose lives are devoid of rest from curses in effect are dabbling in sin? Well, not all, but most times, it is a possibility. Of course there are Believers whose bane is clear ignorance, and “perish”, or better put languish from lack of knowledge. They don't know their rights in Christ, and because of this they can't/ aren't exercising their authority in Christ over Satan, demons and their activities over their lives. Our Christian authority grants us right to engage in spiritual warfare against all wicked forces, fighting from a place of victory won already by Christ for us.

Then there's the percentage who have only as evidence of their Christianity, a lip confession of Jesus and an outward form of righteousness; they aren't truly converted. So they fool the world, even themselves. But they can't fool Satan/demons who know a life filled with the Spirit of God when they

see one. How can such professing “Christians” claim their rights in Christ and rest with such a lifestyle?

And, there’s also the group of professing Christians whose lives are devoid of rest; because, despite the fact that they are knowledgeable and in right standing, they are too lazy to engage in spiritual warfare! They believe whatever will be will be. They are left with an inheritance unclaimed.

I believe you realize that the essence of this lengthy discourse is to discourage the newly converted from playing with sin. It’s like playing with fire; it will burn you! It is also to encourage the rebellious Believer to repent, seek God’s forgiveness and stay converted! So, you can obtain God’s mercy, with your sins wiped out, and you can have God as your ally again. It is also to discourage both the new convert and standing believer from being lazy Christians.

7 CLAUSES OF MERCY, GRACE, AND FAVOUR

HAVING COME this far reading this book, you must have come across at least one clause in the issue of curses, right? For instance, a Believer's innocence. Well, clauses are conditions that prevent certain things from happening, in this case, curses. I'm not a lawyer, but I do know that at times legal documents, e.g., contracts contain clauses, i.e., conditions attached to the agreement that address various topics, defining rights and obligations etc. Call them the if's and the but's. For better understanding, let's play court. I'll share 3 if's and a but.

Court in Session – First Case: God vs. Eve and Adam

Lucifer usually takes the role of the accuser, but in this first case of the first sin, Lucifer doesn't even get a chance to take the first humans to heavenly court. God came on the scene after the sin, and was the One who began asking the questions and pronouncing judgment.

Here's where we are really going with all this. What God originally said to Adam in Genesis 2:16-17, and I believe he repeated to his wife, is that, they could eat freely of every tree of the garden but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they weren't allowed to eat and that in the day that they eat of it, they shalt surely die. Now what you're about to read isn't popular opinion, but take a minute to think on it.

What if God really meant that their lives will end immediately that very hour they sinned and that that sudden death in that hour and on that day was the full weight of their sin, that that was the judgment befitting for them; but that God pardoned them from that very hour's death sentence? They didn't ask for it, I know, but that by Himself God had known there was a possibility of them going left instead of right. So, even though He didn't announce the clause to them, He had prepared Himself that in the case that Adam and Eve do disobey, and instead of them dying immediately that 24-hour day, He would give them a different set of judgment – still punishment nonetheless, and they would still die physically (in the sense of 2 Peter 3:8) – but they'll have ample time for repentance. Do you see it?

It's not hard to imagine God doing this because of His nature. I believe that God's mercy plays a huge role in the cases of curses with causes, and the first time we see it play out is in the case of Adam and Eve

who though were deserving of death the very hour they sinned, received instead a different set of judgments and death still, but at a much later time – within the same day (2 Peter 3:8).

The Clause of Mercy

So, yes, the first clause is God's mercy, something we ought to be grateful for, especially the non-believer and rebellious Believer reading this (Lamentations 3:22-23). It is the mercy of God that's not allowing you feel the full weight of the consequences of your inherited curse, or even the consequences of your own personal actions and inaction. And believe me when I write this, it is not because God is slack (slow, sluggish, lazy, negligent, inconsistent) but because He is long-suffering (patient, forbearing, tolerant, forgiving). Besides, your destruction won't please Him; it is your salvation that will. So, the period of mercy is one that must not be taken lightly, but must be grabbed and utilized well, by embracing God's way out through repentance and absolute faith in Jesus, even abiding continually in Jesus (2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 1:9; Acts 16:30-31; John 15:6; Romans 4:7-8).

To refuse to utilize the period of mercy is foolishness and it would eventually lead to regret, for according to the Scriptures in Hebrews 9:27, once one dies, the period of mercy automatically ends, and what comes next is judgment – a time when you're eventually held accountable for your actions and

inaction, and you feel the full weight of sin's consequence. It's all decided, based on your earthly choices, what your eternal fate will be. It is my prayer that that time won't eventually be a time of regret for you, in Jesus' name (Amen)!

Court in Session – Second Case: Lucifer vs. the Believer

Let's assume Cain, Ham (Canaan's father), Rebekah, Rachel, Simeon, Levi and Reuben were all at some time non-believers/rebellious Believers and backsliders when they all fell into sin. What that means is that there's a debt owed, right? And even curses/consequences are hanging over their heads, or like in Ham's case, for his sins, there's a curse hanging over his son, Canaan's head; and then, at some point, they all get to a crossroads in their lives and decide it's time to take steps in the right direction.

They look inwards, see how they've sinned; they become really repentant and decide to embrace God's way out provided in Jesus who has paid the ransom for all humanity; then they become like the modern-day Believers. I'm talking about the real deal Believers, not posers. What happens next would be this. Even though the wages of sin is death, meaning death in this life, i.e. being open to satanic oppression, affliction and eventually physical death which leads to the sharing of Satan's eternal fate in hell, and despite being deserving of all of these, they

are forgiven, this sentence is overturned, sins erased and a clean slate issued based on their sincere faith in Jesus and in His sacrifice. They get to live a debt-free life, a life free of the effects of these curses, and eventually they get to spend eternity with Christ in heaven, no longer separated from God (Romans 6:23, 2 Corinthians 5:17-18a).

The Clause of Grace

The second clause is God's grace. Yes, by grace through faith in Jesus, curses, even curses with causes, lose their power! God's grace is His free and unmerited favour, beautifully manifested to us in one word, Salvation, or better put in one name: Jesus.

God's grace is the way out for us from sin and its consequences. Yet, it is not a license to continue to sin. By now we already know that this doesn't stop our accuser from bringing up our past failures; but of what use will it be before God when He has put our past sins far away from us, even as far as the east is from the west, putting us in right standing before God. As Apostle Paul rightly says in Romans 8:33, *"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth!"* So, going forward, Satan's accusations are utter waste of time.

God knows this, Satan also knows this; and it is very important that you know all these too! Know it and know peace.

Remember, we now have two clauses, God's mercy and God's grace. There's a third, which I want us to briefly explore.

Court in Session – Third Case: The Envious vs. the Blessed

Another way to put this is the non-believer vs the true and blameless Believer. Now it is to be understood that all true Believers, just like the Israelites in the time of old, are blessed by God, and that blessing, though chiefly spiritual, manifests itself also in the physical in different ways and aspects of our lives, whether in number, quality, possessions, achievements etc; and as a result of this blessing, the non-believer, expectedly, becomes envious or even like in the case of Balak and the Moabites, become threatened, and then attempts to curse/revoke the blessing of God upon our lives. But, like in Balak and Balaam's case, their negative schemes will fail too.

If we backtrack to the case of Balak vs the Israelites, we'd do well to remember everything God said, even the words He spoke to Balaam. I'd share them here again for us from Numbers 22.

12 And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed.

20 And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do.

35 And the angel of the Lord said unto Balaam, Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

From Numbers 23:

7 And he took up his parable, and said, Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel.

8 How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied?

18 And he took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor:

19 God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

20 Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.

From Numbers 24:

9 He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.

10 And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together: and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times.

Balaam was commanded not to curse the Israelites because God had declared them blessed. When Balaam was permitted to go, he was commanded to obey God's words. In fact, he was permitted to only speak the words spoken to him by God. And when he did speak, one theme was constant: God's blessing that remained irreversible. Now, that's another clause - God's Favour.

The Clause of Favour

It is undeniable that the Israelites had God's approval, support, love and even a generous dose of His preferential treatment, and because the Source of all their blessings was God, and at the root of it His favour, reversing it became impossible. In fact, attempts at reversing it meant trouble – God's wrath. In the end, the three attempts made by Balak and

Balaam to curse the Israelites were foiled. What's amazing is, they don't even get to utter the curses, let alone see it not manifest.

The message I am hoping to pass across here is that, as long as a true Believer is blessed by God, that blessing can't be reversed. If there is an attempt, the favour of God acts as a shield for the Believer, just like we saw it in action on behalf of the Israelites. Let me share a portion from Psalm 5.

11 But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.

12 For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.

The question this then poses for all who claim to be true Believers is this, is God the only source of your blessings? I ask this because, even though God blesses the Believer, many have been known to desire more than what God has bestowed upon them, and have chased after riches, money etc, via many unlawful means.

Well, if you fall into this category, I can't categorically say that God's favour will act as a shield for you, because, the fate of such people, if they remain unrepentant, even if they are not cursed by any human, is destruction and perdition (1 Timothy

6:6-10). Yes, this is your cue to retrace your steps and get into alignment with God once again. There's finally one last clause- a but I'd like us to consider.

Court in Session – Fourth Case: Sin vs. the Believer

When we rounded off on the attempts to curse the Israelites, Balaam parted ways with Balak, king of Moab, signalling an end to their alliance and the foiling of their plans. But that was not to be the last we would hear of Balaam. There are some portions of Scripture I'd like us to read, both are from the book of Numbers. The first is from Numbers 25.

1 And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.

2 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.

3 And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.

4 And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel.

5 And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baalpeor.

6 And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in

the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

7 And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand;

8 And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.

9 And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.

And the second is from Numbers 31.

7 And they warred against the Midianites, as the Lord commanded Moses; and they slew all the males.

8 And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain; namely, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian: Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword.

15 And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive?

16 Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass

against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord.

From all that we've read, many things come to light. The first is that Balaam didn't cease to become Israel's adversary despite his encounter with the Lord God of Israel until he died. Another thing is that he didn't stop collaborating with Israel's opponents, namely the Moabites and the Midianites, despite knowing the Israelites were God's people. And the third and scariest part is that he discovered how to "curse" the Israelites even if it would be done indirectly.

You see, somehow, perhaps by careful observation, Balaam came to discover that Israel's "kryptonite" is sin. Israel was blessed, untouchable, powerful even as long as they had God as their ally. But with the introduction of sin, let's say idolatry mixed with sexual orgies, as it was in this case, they'd provoke God to anger, and the result will be, not even a literal curse, but worse – a curse immediately put to effect, so to speak – death being the height of it.

And what did Balaam do with this information he gathered? Scriptures report that he shared it with Israel's enemies. As a matter of fact, he counselled them on how to apply this information and use it to advantage. The daughters of Moab, even of Midian,

would be used as bait. They'd lure the people, even the men of Israel into sin. The rest would be history.

Indeed, Israel sinned. And despite the fact that these people were God's true children, recipients of His mercy, grace, and favour, the presence of sin among the people led to death, even the death of twenty-four thousand Israelites. Sin did what Balaam – a false prophet had failed to do. It cursed them with a plague, reducing their number by twenty-four thousand.

Where am I going with this, what I'm trying to introduce is a loop – a vicious cycle, an end of a thing that somehow is still connected to a beginning. Imagine a scenario of a non-believer who has enjoyed a period of mercy, then embracing Christ and enjoying God's grace, thus becoming a child of God and is blessed by God, even enjoying His favour, acting as a shield for him. In the case that this child of God begins to sin here and there, every now and then, or even habitually, the vicious cycle of sin and consequence that was previously interrupted and even halted begins all over again – a loop.

I know I run the risk of sounding like a broken record, especially when it comes to talking about sin in this book. But I can't stress it enough. Repetition like this is very important. Sin in the life of the Believer, especially unconfessed, wilful and habitual meddles with payment terms, the dispute resolution – by this I mean it hinders you from enjoying your

full rights and privileges as a child of God, something Jesus sorted, made available and accessible to you when He took your place on the cross and shed His blood for you.

As we round off, I'll like to direct our focus to some characteristics of the sin of the Israelites: Idolatry – the introduction of a different god. Sexual orgies – that is the allowance of something God had prohibited, for sex is only to be enjoyed within the confines of marriage between a man and a woman, but now they were indulging in it outside the confines of marriage with strange women too. The summary of the matter is that even though they were lured into sin, they took the bait because they were desirous of something new, a new god and a new lifestyle. They got it quite all right, but at what cost?

Here's my final advice: one way to curb sin in your life is to observe your desires. I believe strongly that it's nearly impossible for the enemy to lure you into sin with something you aren't desirous of. So what are your desires?

EPILOGUE

ARE CURSES real? Yes, they are a real thing. Are they effective? Yes, they do produce the intended result, depending on a number of factors that I believe we've covered, however briefly. Can one tell if a curse is upon one's life and family? Yes, I believe so, especially physical curse, by careful observation of patterns in various areas of one's family or in one's life.

There's also the sure fire way – by divine revelation. It's always good to ask God. He knows all things; and best of all, He has prepared a way out of all curses, whether it's a personal one, a family one, a generational one, a physical one or even spiritual curse. And He won't hide any of such information from us if we are being genuine in our seeking.

Can curses be placed on a Christian? Yes! The rebellious Christian may find his/herself as a target of curses by another person as a result of their actions and even inaction, or even with the aid of a false prophet/priest/diviner. And except God's mercy prevails, the professing Believer may even go on to suffer the full weight of the consequences of such curses.

How does such a Christian protect himself/herself from the effects of a curse? The first step for the rebellious Christian is by genuine repentance. A pardon from God is a game changer!

Can a true, innocent Christian be cursed? No, even though attempts can be made. Inherited consequences can be challenged in prayer (spiritual warfare) – we are expected to exercise our rights and insist on our privileges. We must pray until we see changes!

BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR



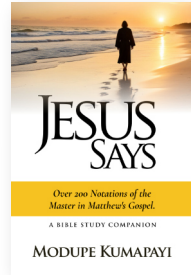
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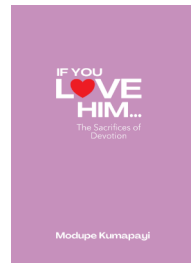
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How dreamers transmute into achievers.



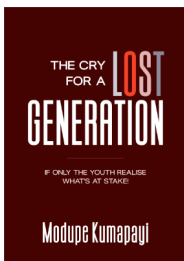
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A challenge to parents and guardians to release their wards to do what God wants and has ordained for each child.



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A book that answers the question, What is God's love? And it presents the challenge, if you love God, then what?



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A book that offers immediate help for anyone seeking God now and seeking to do His will regardless of their past.



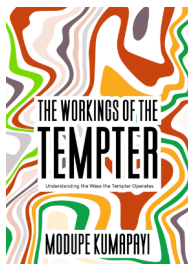
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A dramatic retelling of Dinah's story. A book that offers you a claim: You can separate yourself unto God and live free of Satan's defilement.



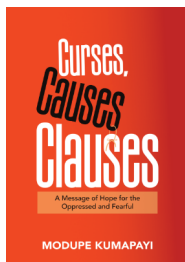
Prophet or Magician?

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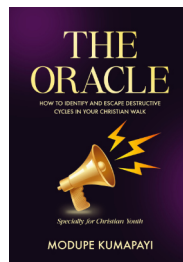
The Workings of the Tempter

The Workings of the Tempter is an unusual book; it retells Bible episodes of temptations and chronicles incidences of many who had fallen for the tempter's cunning ways of trapping those he lures into sin.



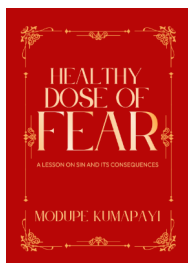
Curses, Causes and Clauses

Curses, Causes and Clauses is written to answer questions about curses, show you the way out of curses, and also teach you how to remain free from curses.



The Oracle

The Oracle reveals hidden truths about the Christian life. Opens the way to understanding why some Christians fell in the early church and how you can stand today and gain heaven at last.



Healthy Dose of Fear

Healthy Dose of Fear equips you to be a victorious, sin-overcoming, holy, upright, and heaven-assured child of God.

THE BOOK

The subject of curses has been from time, what causes or opens the door to curses to take effect, and whether there are exemptions, for those on whom curses have no effects. In a world almost depressed with catastrophes, whether on individuals, on families, even communities and race, it is not uncommon to trace the root of troubles to curses.

- Are you cursed?
- Is that the way you feel?
- How did you come about that?

Well, guess no more. *Curses, Causes and Clauses* is written to answer your questions and show you the way out of curses. And if you are free from curses this moment, find here too how to remain free and strong.

THE AUTHOR

MODUPE KUMAPAYI believes strongly that God has impressed upon her heart to share through her writings the knowledge she has gained in her walk with God and the insight she has been given in her study of God's Word. Her deepest desire is to arm people with the truth; and her greatest fulfilment comes from watching people thrive spiritually.