

“Ahab – Making Light of Sin”
1 Kings 16:28-34
(Preached at Trinity, May 23, 2021)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In **Verses 27-28** the twelve-year reign of Omri comes to an end and he was buried in his capital city of Samaria. His reign had been one of stability, influence, and power. His reign did not begin or end with a coup. His power can be testified to by sources outside the Bible that tell us that even years after Omri's death the nations still referred to Israel as "The Land of Omri."
Omri's death brought about the peaceful succession of his heir, Ahab. Ahab's reign would also bring stability, however, like those before him sin and evil continued and increased.
 - A. Ahab's father, Omri, had the distinction of having exceeded in wickedness all who preceded him.
1 Kings 16:25 NAU - "Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, and acted more wickedly than all who were before him."
 - B. Now Ahab exceeds even the wickedness of his father.
1 Kings 16:30 NAU - "Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD more than all who were before him."
 - C. It's almost as if each successive king made it his ambition to outdo all others in evil. Jeroboam won the award for being the most evil king but Omri seizes the trophy. But now we're told that Ahab outdid them both.
2. There is more recorded of the life and reign of Ahab than any of the other kings of Israel, yet the author gives us a quick summary in **Verse 30**.
1 Kings 16:30 NAU - "Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD more than all who were before him."
 - A. Ahab far exceeded in wickedness all who went before him. The author jumps right in to describe the wickedness of Ahab. From God's perspective this is the main thing.
 - B. Ahab reigned for 22 years and did many things, but the author is letting us know at the beginning, nothing else really matters. Did he follow God?
3. At the very beginning we are told that Ahab married Jezebel, the Sidonian princess who advanced Baal worship in Israel.
 - A. We'll learn much more about Jezebel later. Her life was wickedness personified. This one wife advanced the sin of Israel more than all of Solomon's wives combined. Allowing his wife to steer him, Ahab erected a temple for the worship of Baal within the capital city. Israel had often been enticed by Baal worship.
Judges 2:11-13 NAU - "Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals, ¹² and they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from *among* the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the LORD to anger. ¹³ So they forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtaroth."

- B. Ahab was making Baal worship the official worship of Israel. Jezebel brazenly opened warfare against God. She murdered the prophets of God and determined to make Baal the only god in Israel.
 - C. It was under the reign of Ahab that God raised up Elijah who would be God's spokesman against the corruption of Ahab.
4. In **Verse 31** the author uses an unusual phrase to summarize Ahab's attitude towards sin. NASB - "as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam" KJV, ESV - "as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam"
5. Nothing can be more frightful than to become so hardened by sin that we are unmoved by it. We don't tremble under God's wrath. This describes Ahab. For Ahab, sin was just a small, trivial, inconsequential thing.
- a. When Nathan came to David and announced his sin David was smitten.
Psalms 51:4 NAU - "Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight"
 - b. If Nathan had come to Ahab he would have responded, "It's no big deal!" Ahab would find it easy to dismiss the warnings of Elijah.
- I. Sin will progressively harden the human heart – this has been the path of Israel's kings
- A. God has endowed every man with a conscience
 - 1. Our conscience is the inner understanding of the Divine – the existence of God and His holy commands. The lost man suppresses it.
 - 2. Our conscience is the Law written upon the heart - a sense of right and wrong, of good and evil
Romans 2:14-15 NAU - "For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵ in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,"
 - 3. If we reject the Law, if we reject God's rightful reign, we won't comprehend the weightiness of sin. It will seem a light thing.
 - a. This was the situation with Ahab. He had become his own law.
 - b. Ahab wasn't concerned about matters of God's Law. After all, he was the king. He made the rules. It didn't seem evil for Ahab to take Jezebel as his wife. It was a good political move. She was a Phoenician princess. The alliance with Sidon was a wise economic decision. It would give Israel access to the world trade entering the Sidonian ports. This didn't seem evil at all.
 - c. Ahab may have placed an economic or political value in his marriage with Jezebel. But God saw it as a moral issue.
 - d. It's like the Christian young person today that courts an unbeliever, eventually becoming engaged. It is a small thing. The only thing important is that we love one another. They find it easy to set aside God's Law. And if they live together first, its no big deal.
 - 4. And it didn't seem evil to erect a temple to Baal. This worship was well entrenched in the family of Jezebel. Her father's name was Ethbaal.
 - a. Ahab not only wanted to marry a Baal worshipper. He wanted to *be* a Baal worshipper. He wanted to maintain the family tradition and please his wife.

- b. Matthew Henry describes well the wickedness of Ahab's idolatry: "Ahab built a temple in Samaria, the royal city . . . He would have Baal's temple near him, that he might the better frequent it, protect it, and put honour upon it. He reared an altar in that temple, on which to offer sacrifice to Baal, by which they acknowledged their dependence upon him and sought his favour."¹
 - c. God was dismissed, despised, and diminished.
 - d. It was all trivial in Ahab's mind.
But it was not trivial with God.
1 Kings 16:33 NAU - "Thus Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel than all the kings of Israel who were before him."
 - e. The author implies that the sin of Baal worship exceeded Jeroboam's calf worship.
But it was trivial in Ahab's eyes.
- B. Ahab's conscience was beyond feeling.
- 1. Instead of submitting to God's Law he established his own standard – his own comfort level, what was right in his eyes.
 - 2. He could allow all manner of sin into his life and think little of it.
For Ahab, it was a light thing, a trivial thing.
 - 3. Ahab's worst problem was his view of God.
 - a. To Ahab God was small and insignificant. When God is small sin will be small. It will be trivial and insignificant. Ahab found it easy to dismiss God's Law because he found it easy to dismiss God.
It was no big deal.
 - b. When God is large sin will be a weighty thing.
- II. As the conscience becomes increasingly hardened and calloused so will the level of behavior which one can live in without offending the conscience.
This describes our generation.
- A. Our generation is no longer embarrassed by sin – few even recognize sin.
- 1. People used to blush at immorality – now they glory in it.
Philippians 3:18-19 NAU - "For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* enemies of the cross of Christ, ¹⁹ whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* appetite, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things."
Jeremiah 6:15 NAU - "Were they ashamed because of the abomination they have done? They were not even ashamed at all; They did not even know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; At the time that I punish them, They shall be cast down," says the LORD."
 - 2. The problem with the lost man is he has no shame.
People used to blush when referring to human sexuality. Today, television is full of sexual innuendo, but we have become desensitized to it.

¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 506.

3. It used to be shameful when a teenage girl became pregnant out of wedlock. Today 40 percent of babies are born to single moms. 83% of abortions are by unwed mothers.
4. Divorce used to be considered shameful. Many today choose to cohabitate rather than commit to marriage.
5. Homosexuality and transgender behavior is the norm and the practice is guaranteed by law. It is dangerous today to call it sin. You can lose your job.
6. People today use the name of God as a common curse word. There is no fear of God.

Psalm 36:1-4 NAU - "Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart; There is no fear of God before his eyes. ² For it flatters him in his *own* eyes Concerning the discovery of his iniquity *and* the hatred *of it*. ³ The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit; He has ceased to be wise *and* to do good. ⁴ He plans wickedness upon his bed; He sets himself on a path that is not good; He does not despise evil."

- B. God's standards have not changed. Sin is still sin. It is a weighty thing.
1. Much of what we approve of today is testimony that God has already turned us over to our own corruption.

Romans 1:26-27 NAU - "For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, ²⁷ and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error."
 2. Paul says homosexuality is simply testimony to a degraded heart. People try to explain this away. But the words are clear. God has given them over to degrading passions.
 3. But we must not pretend that this is the only expression of our corruption.
 - a. Pornography is another expression of the corruption of our heart
It is a \$13 billion per year business.
9 out of 10 boys are exposed before age 18.
Surveys show that many professing Christian men are affected including a high percentage of pastors.
 - b. Our society has had the conscience hardened towards sin.
Sin has become a trivial thing.
 - c. Lies, gossip, strife, selfishness – all expose our hardened hearts.
- C. Paul spoke of shameful things done in secret
- Ephesians 5:11-12 NAU** - "Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; ¹² for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret."
1. There aren't many secret sins today. Most sin is practiced openly and proudly.
 2. Like Ahab, they consider their sins as a small, trivial thing

3. Sadly, sin has found safe haven in the church.
The church has become worldly.
Vance Havner said 40 years ago – “The church began flirting with the world and fell in love.”
4. There is great danger in becoming desensitized to sin. As we are exposed to our culture and our minds are filled with the deeds of the flesh we can begin to accept what God abhors.

Conclusion:

1. Ahab stands as an example of what happens when sin is left to fester in the heart of man. Ahab ceased to feel remorse for sin. He ceased to feel anything at all. Sin was trivial and insignificant.
2. The consequence was he lost everything. When Elijah burst upon the scene at the beginning **Chapter 17** we see the ultimate consequence. Ahab was an Israelite. His forefathers knew and served the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
Elijah describes God: “As the LORD, the God of Israel lives.”
For Ahab he could no longer see the reality of an all knowing, all present, living God.
And the God of Israel was no longer his God.
3. Ahab would be left to perish in his sin. And what a terrifying thought.