

“God’s Curse”
1 Kings 16:34
(Preached at Trinity, May 30, 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. **Verses 29-33** serve as an introduction to the reign of Ahab. There is more recorded of the life and reign of Ahab than any other of the kings of Israel, yet in these verses the author gives us a quick summary. Ahab far exceeded in wickedness all who went before him. The author is reminding us that from God’s perspective this is the main thing.
2. In **Chapter 17** we will be introduced to Elijah the prophet, who would be a major figure during the reign of Ahab. Elijah would serve as God’s mouthpiece to announce judgement upon the wickedness of Ahab.
3. But in **Verse 34** the author pauses on his account of Ahab to insert a brief account on a construction project by a man from Bethel by the name of Hiel. On one hand, it seems out of place. It doesn’t seem to have anything to do with the reign of Ahab. On the other hand, it perfectly describes the condition of the land.
 - A. First of all, he was a Bethelite. His hometown was the site Jeroboam chose to house one of the two golden calves he created.
1 Kings 12:27-29 NAU - "If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord, *even* to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah." ²⁸ So the king consulted, and made two golden calves, and he said to them, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt." ²⁹ He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan."
It is interesting, the Hebrew word for Bethel literally means, “House of God.”
 - B. Second, it sets before us the defiance of Israel towards God. It’s as if they are mocking God and defying Him to do anything about it.
After the destruction of the city of Jericho God made a solemn oath, a declaration of His curse upon the city of Jericho.
Joshua 6:26 NAU - "Then Joshua made them take an oath at that time, saying, "Cursed before the LORD is the man who rises up and builds this city Jericho; with *the loss of* his firstborn he shall lay its foundation, and with *the loss of* his youngest son he shall set up its gates."
4. It had been over 500 years since the destruction of Jericho. God’s curse upon the city is now ancient history. People think that time will remove the curse of sin—a year, five years, ten years, a lifetime?
5. In 500 years no one dared to defy God’s curse against Jericho. No one until now.
1 Kings 16:34 NAU - "In his days Hiel the Bethelite built Jericho"
6. What a change has taken place within Israel between the leadership of Joshua and the leadership of Ahab.

- A. Under Joshua Jericho was destroyed and Israel began the conquest of the Canaanites. God was with them, symbolized in the Tabernacle and Ark of the Covenant.
Under Ahab Jericho was rebuilt. They had long given up on being separate from the pagan nations. Instead of building a Temple unto God he built a temple unto Baal, the god of the Canaanites.
- B. Under Joshua careful attention was given to obeying the Word of God
Joshua 1:8 NAU - "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success."
Under Ahab, there was a total disregard of the Word of God.
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."
- I. The location of this verse implies the rebuilding of Jericho was under Ahab's direction
- A. "In his days" – that is, during the reign of Ahab
1. Ahab probably saw Jericho as a strategic site and desired it to be rebuilt and fortified. But this was against the will of God.
All that Ahab did was in defiance of God. He had a record of defiance.
 2. He married a foreign wife which God strictly forbade.
Deuteronomy 7:1-6 NAU - "When the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you, ² and when the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them. ³ "Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. ⁴ "For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you. ⁵ "But thus you shall do to them: you shall tear down their altars, and smash their *sacred* pillars, and hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire. ⁶ "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth."
 3. Ahab not only married a foreign woman, he constructed a temple for Baal within his capital city.
1 Kings 16:32 NAU - "So he erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he built in Samaria."
 4. He put to death God's prophets
 5. The author is telling us here that Ahab had no regard for the Word of God
- B. God's Word is absolute and unfailing.
1. Hiel lost two sons in the rebuilding of Jericho
 - a. He lost his first born when he laid the foundations
 - b. He lost his youngest son when the gates were hung

2. The city was completed and stood for 2 hundred years
The curse was not pronounced upon those dwelling in Jericho but upon the one who would rebuild it.
3. Jericho was destroyed when the Babylonians invaded Judah
It was never again rebuilt. The Jericho spoken of in the NT was in a different location.
4. The author is reminding us the Word of the Lord will stand
Hiel lost his sons according to God's absolute Word.

II. God has promised His curse upon sin

Romans 1:18 NAU - "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,"

A. Those who do not obey the Law come under God's curse

Galatians 3:10 NAS - "For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them."

Deuteronomy 27:26 NAU - "Cursed is he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them."

1. The Law demands perfection. It exposes our sin and declares us to be lawbreakers. How many times do we need to transgress the Law to be a transgressor?

James 2:10 NAU - "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all."

2. We have not met the Law's demands and stand condemned by it.
We have been examined and the verdict is clear - GUILTY
3. As lawbreakers we are under the curse of God
4. Mount Sinai was a perfect picture of the Law's condemnation
 - a. Mount Sinai was a mountain dark and stormy because of the curse of the Law. It was a fearful scene. The people were terrified.
Exodus 19:16 NAU - "So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled."
 - b. Israel stood before God condemned and alienated. God appeared on Sinai in His infinite holiness and Israel was unable to approach.
This is because they were sinful and defiled.
5. This describes us all. We are under the curse of God, alienated from Him, unable to approach Him, condemned by Him.

B. Few tremble as these words

1. They pretend all is well. They deny they are under God's judgment because they do not understand the Law's demand of perfection.
2. They do not consider the fury of God's condemnation
Hebrews 10:30-31 NAS - "For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge His people." ³¹ It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

3. Is there anything more terrifying than to stand as a sinner before an infinitely holy God?
- C. Is there anything that can remove the curse? What shall we do?
People fall into one of three camps.
1. There are those who simply dismiss the danger. They pretend it doesn't exist. They go merrily through life assuming that if there is a heaven that is their destiny.
 2. There are those who understand there is a God who is holy and they have not lived perfectly before Him.
 - a. They give themselves over to self-reliance--trying to live a life good enough to be accepted by God.
 - b. This basically describes all of the religions of the world.
 - c. Some of these people can become quite religious and even intensely moral:
 - Martin Luther's life as a Catholic monk was filled with great works of piety and self-denial
 - Charles Wesley as a lost college student joined with some other young men to form what they termed the "Holy Club" in which they pledged themselves to regular times of prayer and committed themselves to acts of benevolence and the pursuit of holiness. All without knowing Christ.
 - d. These lost religious people are filled with self-reliance, self-confidence, and self-reformation. They are leaning upon the works of Law.
 - e. This person has no true assurance. This is the problem with Roman Catholicism. There is no peace, no comfort, no assurance. They can never be sure they have done enough.
 3. The third group are those who rest in Christ alone. Their only hope is Christ. They have no confidence in their good works. Their hope is in Christ and nothing else. Their good works are works of faith; works to the honor of Christ, but they know there is no merit in them.
 - a. They know they are not perfect but God is working in them the increasing beauty of holiness. When they sin they find a merciful Savior full of grace.
 - b. This person knows Christ and rests in Him. He trusts in Christ's righteousness. He has the peace of reconciliation. The curse has been lifted.
 4. If you have decided to try to earn your way to God's acceptance through your own works and obedience know this. The Law demands perfection. It is unforgiving. If you fail only once you fall under the Law's curse.
Galatians 3:10 NAU - "For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them."
James 2:10 KJV - "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all."

- D. Jesus Christ bore the curse of God upon the cross. He took our sins upon Himself and became a curse for us.
- Galatians 3:13 NAU** - "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us"
1. He did this in a two-fold way.
 - a. Remember, the Law demands perfection. The Law IS God's way of righteousness. We have broken God's Law. We cannot keep it. But Jesus kept it perfectly. He met the Law's demands. For those who trust in Christ His righteousness has become their righteousness.
 - b. Second, our transgressions against the Law have brought us under the curse of the Law. Our sin has brought us under the wrath of God. God's wrath has been appeased through the blood of Christ. Paul says here that when Jesus died on the cross in our place, He became a curse for us.
 2. We need a righteousness that is infinitely above our own. We need someone to stand in our stead. We need a righteousness beyond ourselves. We refer to this as an alien righteousness.
 3. Jesus Christ serves as our Mediator. He intercedes on our behalf. Apart from Christ you will stand before a Holy Judge. You will stand condemned before a God whose presence is terrifying.

Conclusion:

1. Where is your hope? Upon what are you trusting?
 - a. Are you trusting that somehow it turn out well? It is just too much to give attention to.
 - b. Or you've weighed the matter and have concluded it is too serious to dismiss. So, you've decided to try to live a moral life and hope it is enough.
 - c. Or, you've weighed the matter and concluded you are helpless and undone? You've cast yourself upon the mercies of Christ and have trusted in merits of Christ alone?
2. Jericho reminds us of the abiding presence of God's curse upon sin. The Gospel reminds us of the grace of forgiveness. Only in Christ do we find forgiveness of sin and freedom from the curse of God.