

“Foreshadowing Forgiveness”
1 Kings 18:45-46
(Preached at Trinity, August 15, 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. **Chapter 17** records the great drought and famine that came upon the land. It was by the command of God through His prophet.
1 Kings 17:1 NAU - "As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."
2. We aren't left in the dark regarding the reason God commanded the drought. Israel had fallen into gross idolatry. Each of Israel's kings led them deeper and deeper into sin. Ahab exceeded all who preceded him.
1 Kings 16:30-33 NAU - "Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD more than all who were before him. ³¹ It came about, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went to serve Baal and worshiped him. ³² So he erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he built in Samaria. ³³ Ahab also made the Asherah. Thus Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel than all the kings of Israel who were before him."
3. The drought lasted many days. **Chapter 18** opens with the land still suffering through the endless days without rain. There were no crops, no harvests.
We read in **Verse 2** - "Now the famine was severe in Samaria."
It was in this setting that God sent Elijah to meet Ahab. This set the stage for the showdown between Elijah and the prophets of Baal.
 - A. At first, the people of Israel were not decided as to who should have their allegiance and worship, God or Baal.
1 Kings 18:21 NAU - "Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long *will* you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him a word."
 - B. Elijah would prove Baal to be a dead, impotent god of human invention. Baal was the god of rain but was powerless to provide relief. In the showdown between Elijah and the prophets of Baal God proved Himself mighty and the impotence of Baal was displayed and his prophets were destroyed.
1 Kings 18:40 NAU - "Then Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal; do not let one of them escape." So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there."
4. The Israelite representatives who witnessed the amazing display of God's power were smitten and fell on their faces.
1 Kings 18:39 NAU - "When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God."

5. Years before, Solomon prayed during the dedication of the Temple:
1 Kings 8:35-36 NAU - "When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain, because they have sinned against You, and they pray toward this place and confess Your name and turn from their sin when You afflict them, ³⁶ then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of Your servants and of Your people Israel, indeed, teach them the good way in which they should walk. And send rain on Your land, which You have given Your people for an inheritance."
 6. God forgave Israel and ended the drought.
1 Kings 18:45 NAU - "In a little while the sky grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy shower. "
 7. There are some important truths we need to consider and understand as we consider God's forgiveness.
- I. This forgiveness was designed to point to Jesus Christ.
- A. It was a foreshadow
 1. God turning away His wrath upon Israel was of temporal significance. It was a physical, earthly drought upon the nation of Israel.
 2. There were many cycles of Israel sinning and repenting and God forgiving. The Book of Judges displays this well. Israel would sin, God would raise up an adversary, Israel would cry out, God would raise up a deliverer who would deliver Israel. But after a season Israel would return to their sin and the cycle would repeat.
 - B. God's forgiveness of Israel also pointed to His covenant faithfulness
 1. God promised He would not forsake them, even though they were stiff-necked and hardhearted.
 2. Israel was God's covenant people. He forgave them because of His covenant promise.
2 Chronicles 7:12-14 KJV - "And the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice. ¹³ If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; ¹⁴ If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."
 3. Each time God's forgiveness was conditioned upon their repentance. There were times that God forgave a heathen nation who repented.
Jonah 3:4-5 NAU - "Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown." ⁵ Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them."
Jonah 3:10 NAU - "When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do *it*."
 - C.

C. God's dealings with physical Israel was a foreshadow of that which was to come. All of the Old Covenant promises pointed to the fulfillment in Christ.

1. Israel's repentance was temporary. They would soon return to their idolatry. Ahab was unchanged. Jezebel would continue to display her wickedness.
2. God's forgiveness was also temporal and conditional. But it was meant to draw our attention to the God's forgiveness in the New Covenant which was unconditional and permanent.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 NAU - "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. ³³ "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

II. This sets up the greatest of all paradoxes

A. Why is this a paradox?

1. A paradox is statement or proposition that seems self-contradictory, but in reality it is a statement of absolute truth.
2. God is Holy! In fact, God is holy, holy, holy
3. God is also perfectly just. If God has given His Law and commands obedience and threatens judgment upon breach of the Law, then if someone violates the Law he must suffer the consequences.
 - a. From the beginning of the Bible God has threatened punishment for sin—violation of His Law.
 - b. God told Adam,

Genesis 2:17 NAU - "for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

Joshua 24:19-20 NAU - "Then Joshua said to the people, "You will not be able to serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression or your sins. ²⁰ "If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you after He has done good to you."
 - c. If God were to allow sin to go unpunished He would violate His holiness, deny Himself, and prove Himself to be an unjust Judge. He would become a lawbreaker.
 - d. God cannot simply overlook our sin. God cannot simply say, "I forgive you"
4. How is it that God could forgive iniquity as if it had never happened.

"for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

- B. This presents us with the glory of God's grace that the Old Covenant ordinances displayed—they all pointed to Christ.
1. The Temple was designed to display the holiness of God. God dwelt in the holy of holies, within the veil.
 2. Israel was constantly reminded of their duty to the Law. The Law was kept in the Ark of the Covenant. The Law showed them their sin and their helplessness to meet the demands of the Law—perfect obedience.
 3. The ceremonial system pointed them to Christ. The blood of bulls and goats taught them of the necessity of atonement, of sacrifice, of substitute, of propitiation. The lid of the Ark was called the mercy seat, the place of propitiation.
- C. But the great question remains. How can God pardon our sins without denying His own holiness?
1. Humanly speaking, we can offer no legitimate answer
 - a. Sin has left us guilty. It has left us with an impossible debt before God – We could never provide enough to satisfy the debt.
 - b. Trying to live a better life is too little, too late.
 - c. It demands a work that only God can do.
But how could God do it without denying His own holiness?
 2. First, God had to deal with the problem of our sin – our guilt
 - a. Since God *must* punish sin, it is a certainty that we will eventually fall under His just judgment. In fact, sinners are already under His wrath.
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,"
 - b. But what if it were possible for someone to bear God's wrath in our place? And who would do such a thing? And since no other convicted criminal could stand in our place, what can be done? It would have to be a perfect, sinless substitute.
 - c. The perfect, infinitely pure Messiah would stand in our place.
Isaiah 53:4-5 NAU - "Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵ But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed."
 3. Second, God had to do something about our wicked hearts.
 - a. A radical change was essential
 - b. God has given us a new heart
Ezekiel 11:19-20 NAU - "And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰ that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God."
Jeremiah 31:33 NAU - "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

4. The demands of God's holy Law had to be satisfied. We need a righteousness that is beyond us—a righteousness that is not our own—an alien righteousness. Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law's demands and offers His righteousness to us.
5. Our sins have been atoned for. Through Christ's redeeming sacrifice our guilt has been taken away. We call this expiation. In a sense, redemption and forgiveness is the same act.

Romans 3:23-26 NAU - "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵ whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶ for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

III. Forgiveness is made possible through the redeeming sacrifice of Christ –

Colossians 1:14 NAU - "in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

A. In the Old Covenant Israel received forgiveness by believing in God's promise

1. God turned His wrath away from Baal worshipping Israel because they repented of their sins, because the blood of atonement was offered up upon the altar.

1 Kings 18:38 NAU - "Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench."

2. But their forgiveness was not permanent. It was not lasting because the blood of an animal could not be a permanent substitute and because their hearts had not been changed. They immediately became guilty again.
3. God's Old Covenant saints both believed upon the promise of God of the coming Savior and they received the transforming work of regeneration. We read of Abraham:

Genesis 15:4-6 NAU - "Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who shall come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir." ⁵ And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." ⁶ Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness."

Romans 4:3 NAU - "For what does the Scripture say? "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness."

B. In the New Covenant we have the fulness of the promise. Jesus Christ has fulfilled God's Covenant promises

1. In Christ God promises forgiveness of sin

Jeremiah 31:34 NAU - "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

2. The New Covenant is sealed with the blood of Christ
Ephesians 1:7 NAU - "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace"
3. Every sin brings us under the wrath and curse of God. Only the shedding of blood can bring forgiveness, release, and pardon.
Hebrews 9:22 NAU - "And according to the Law, *one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.*"
4. This is why the church has always gloried in the blood of Christ.
*Would you be free from the burden of sin?
There's power in the blood, power in the blood;
Would you o'er evil a victory win?
There's wonderful power in the blood.*

*What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
O precious is the flow That makes me white as snow;
No other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus.*

*And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be That Thou, my God should die for me?*

*There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains*

Conclusion:

1. How does one receive the benefits of the redemption of Christ and the forgiveness of sin?
Through the Gospel
 1. The Gospel is the record of Christ redeeming His people from their sins.
 2. The Gospel demands faith – trusting in the merits of the atoning sacrifice of Christ; of trusting in the perfection of His blood to satisfy God's justice. Through faith the finished work of Christ is imputed to us.
 3. The Gospel also demands repentance – turning away from our wicked sin and turning to forever follow after Christ.
2. Our salvation is made possible through Christ alone.
John Eadie – "So soon as faith springs up in the heart the pardon of sin is enjoyed—the results of expiation are conferred. Forgiveness is more closely connected with redemption than any other blessing, as it is the only blessing enjoyed immediately from Christ."¹

¹ John Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians*, ed. W. Young, Second Edition., (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1884), Page 40.