Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Curse of God
Scripture: Galatians 3:13
Code: 1259

I want to draw your attention to a topic in the Word of God tonight that is one that is most frequently avoided. The subject that I want to share with you is the curse of God. The curse of God. Not an easy subject to talk about, not an easy subject to understand, and yet one that is clearly indicated repeatedly in the Scripture. As a basic text, I want you to look at the third chapter of Galatians and just the 13th verse. Galatians Chapter 3 and verse 13. While you're turning to it let me remind you that last week we studied Zechariah Chapter 11 in our ongoing study of Zechariah and we remember that the 11th chapter of Zechariah deals with the rejection of the true shepherd.

It prophesized the fact that when Jesus came He would be the true shepherd of Israel, but tragically He would be rejected, He would be spurned, and we'll remember that the 11th chapter of Zechariah even detailed the betrayal of Judas Iscariot. And so we saw how Jesus Christ the Messiah of God, the true shepherd, was spurned by those He loved, or those He came to save. And finally He was killed. Next week, we'll go back to Zechariah, Chapter 11 and we'll see not only that Israel rejects the true shepherd but in the future Israel will accept the false shepherd. They will make an alliance with the Antichrist and we'll be discussing the Antichrist next Lord's Day evening from Zechariah, Chapter 11.

But for tonight as we've gathered around the Lord's table, as we share in the breaking of bread and the cup, it seemed that we ought to stop between the rejection of the true shepherd and the acceptance of the false shepherd, and we ought to talk about the meaning of the death of Christ. They killed the true shepherd. They took His life. But it wasn't without significance by any means; it was with great significance. And the significance of the death of Jesus Christ can be approached from many, many angles. It's like a diamond with an eternal number of facets.

In Galatians Chapter 3 verse 13 we find just one of the facets of the meaning of the death of Christ and the one that I want to draw you to tonight as we prepare our hearts for His table. It says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us. For it is written curseth is everyone that hangeth on a tree."

Now that tremendous statement about the death of Christ takes us to one particular dimension and that is the fact that Jesus, in dying, was bearing a curse. He was bearing a curse. That's basically what I want to talk to you about. Now you'll notice that the Apostle Paul in writing this says that the curse was evident by the hanging on a tree. That takes us back to Mosaic legislation where

criminals, once they were sentenced to death and executed, usually by stoning, were then lifted up and tied to a post or hanged on a tree, if you will, as a symbol of their rejection of God and as a public display of what happens to those who disobey the law of God.

So a cursed person wound up being hanged on a post or a tree. It isn't that being hanged on a tree curses you; it is that having been cursed in Israel's history, you would wind up on a tree. That's the essence of what Paul is saying here. The very fact that Jesus was nailed to a tree, though, it wasn't Jewish style, it was Roman style, is indication that He was cursed.

And who was it that cursed Him? Believe it or not, it was God. It was God that cursed Jesus Christ. And He cursed Him for us, it says. This apparently became fuel for some heresy, because we read in 1st Corinthians 12 verse 3 that there were some people saying Jesus is "accursed." Now what does it mean? What does it mean that Jesus is cursed? What does it mean that he became accursed for us? What does it mean that he bore a curse? Well, let's look for a moment.

The terms, that is the Greek terms, and there - are four or five Greek words that could be translated "curse," all have basically the same meaning and it's very clear what they mean. They mean something that is despised, something that is devoted to destruction, something that is doomed. That's what it means to be cursed. To be cursed by God means that you are set for doom or destruction. The Hebrew terms in the Old Testament where you find the word "cursed," alalah maharakahlala- those Hebrew terms all mean the very same thing. Devoted to doom, devoted to destruction.

Now I want you to take, just for a moment, a little journey through some of the past history of man, particularly related to Scripture, to see how the curses have fit into the Word of God. And how finally they all resolve in the act of Christ on the cross. But first of all, looking at it humanely, men have often cursed each other. We know that. In fact, among more primitive people than our own society (for the most part, although perhaps today with the rise of the occult it is not uncommon in our society) but particularly among primitive people there has always been the belief that a person could curse his enemy, and if he cursed his enemy in so doing he would invoke certain superhuman powers against that enemy and that would result in those superhuman powers executing some terrible destruction upon those enemies.

The pagans have believed, the primitives have believed, for years that crop failure and the death of sheep and the death of cattle and defeat and battle and general misfortune, etc., etc., were caused by spells and curses that were cast from one against his enemy.

In our Western part of the world, in the Western hemisphere, we may be somewhat familiar with something like voodoo where people in Haiti or the Caribbean area will cast a spell on somebody which amounts to a curse and invoke superhuman powers to bring about terrible results and effects.

And I have no question that this has occurred. I have no doubt that this has occurred throughout the history of man, that men have invoked demons who have brought about problems to other people, to their enemies.

Satan and his demons have carried out curses on their own as well as those invoked by other men. In the Old Testament you have an illustration of a professional curser by the name of Balaam. Balaam was the "king of cursers," if you will, and you never heard that title, I made it up. Balaam was the king of cursers; he was a professional blesser or curser, depending on how much you paid. He was a prophet for hire. He was a diviner, he was a soothsayer, he was a prophet, he was a curser, he was a spellbinder. All of those things. And he had a great reputation in the art of cursing people. When he cursed somebody, they really got trouble.

In Numbers Chapter 22 - we won't have you turn to it because we're not going to spend our time on it - but we remember that he lived near the upper Euphrates. And if he lived near the upper Euphrates he would have received a heritage from Babylon, and had he received a heritage from Babylon, it would have been a heritage involved in the art of divination, and the art of divination was very, very much to do with cursing. And no doubt he had many times in his career invoked certain demons to curse certain individuals.

Now when the land across the Jordan began to be invaded by the Israelites, a king who was very fearful, the king of Moab, by the name of Balak, decided that he had to do something to protect himself against the Israelite invasion and so he found Balaam and he hired Balaam to pull one of his super curses on Israel to see if he couldn't invoke the superhuman demons to come down and mess up Israel. And he paid him to do it.

But all of a sudden Balaam had moved out of the domain of Satan and the demons and he had begun to mess with the plan of God. And you'll remember something of the story. First of all, his donkey wouldn't cooperate. Additionally, he couldn't seem to get the curse out and he finally, according to Numbers 22, wound up blessing Israel. So you have one illustration, at least, of a professional curser who went around prophesying doom and invoking demons on other men.

I'm reminded also of 1 Samuel 17:43 where Goliath cursed David by invoking his demonic Gods against David, another curse that didn't work because he was invading territory possessed by God. I'm also reminded in 2 Samuel, Chapter 16 of Shimei who was of the House of Saul, and Shimei came and cursed David and also his curse was unsuccessful because he was touching the Lord's anointed.

Balaam couldn't curse Israel, God's anointed; Goliath couldn't curse David, God's anointed; nor could Shimei. The point that I'm making in all of this is just to show you that cursing has been a part of human history - men have invoked curses on other men - but that's not the major point. The major

point, believe it or not folks, is that God has cursed men. That's right. God has pronounced curses on men. God has said they are devoted to destruction, they are doomed, and it is not just a passing thought in Scripture, it is a major emphasis.

Now frequently when you see the curse of God in the Bible, it is stated as God cursing. Sometimes, you see it as a prophet or a man of God calls on God and pleads with God to curse. So sometimes it is a man of God asking God to curse. Other times it is God who does curse and whenever you have a man of God asking God to curse, it is predicated on the fact that God has said He would curse the kind of behavior that is occurring.

Now let's follow the subject through the Old Testament. Watch. It all begins, really, in Deuteronomy 27 and 28. You might want to turn to that in your Bible. It all begins in Deuteronomy 27 and 28 as far as we're looking at it tonight, although in the fall in Genesis we find the ground being cursed. Here in Deuteronomy 27 and 28 there's a crystallizing of this whole theme of cursing. Now Moses brings the idea of God's cursing into clear focus in these two chapters. Now let me tell you what's happening - just look up and don't worry about the text for a moment.

He declares, Moses does, to Israel. He says this in Chapter 27, verse 9. He says, "O, Israel! This day have you become the people of the Lord!" Now, on the basis of that, you are called to obey. If you obey, you will be *what*? Blessed. If you disobey you will be cursed. Now there is the crystallizing of the concept of the divine curse. Cursed is the disobedient, blessed is the obedient. Now in order to dramatize the significance of this covenant that God was making, Moses inaugurated a most amazing ceremony.

He went to Shekum, in the northern part of Israel, and there were two mountains in Shekum. On the one side - he probably used these two peaks right here to symbolize them - on the one side is Mount Gerizim. And he said six tribes go to the top of Mount Gerizim. The other was Mount Ebal, and he said six tribes go to the top of Mount Ebal.

The six on Gerizim are to symbolize blessing. The six on Ebal are to symbolize cursing. Now you have a choice; which mountain will you climb? Which will you possess? And which response do you choose to receive at the hand of God?

Now in the 27th chapter of Deuteronomy while this little ceremony is being inaugurated, we don't have any mention of the blessings, but we do have a listing of the curses. And if you'll notice down in verse 14 of Chapter 27 we have here 12 curses. Incidentally, 10 of the 12 are specifically mentioned in the law, the Pentateuch.

But look at verse 14. "And the Levites shall speak and say unto all of the men of Israel with a loud voice, now here are the curses. Cursed be the man who makes any carved or melded image, an

abomination to the Lord, the work or the hand of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place, and all the people shall answer and say Amen."

That's the first commandment, you remember. "Cursed is he who dishonors his father or his mother, and all the people shall say Amen." Or so let it be.

"Cursed is he who removes his neighbor's landmark, and all the people shall say Amen.

"Cursed is he who makes the blind to wander out of the way, and all the people shall say Amen."

"Cursed is he who perverts the justice due of the sojourner or the fatherless and widowed, and all the people shall say Amen."

In other words, you get these people on the mountains and you name the curses and everybody in the valley says Amen, so let it be, we accept the responsibility. Verse 20, "Cursed is he who lies with his father's wife because he uncovers his father's skirt, and all the people shall say Amen."

"Cursed be he who lieth with a manner of beast, and all the people shall say Amen."

"Cursed be he who lies with his sister, the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother, and all the people shall say Amen."

"Cursed be he who lies with his mother-in-law and all the people shall say Amen."

"Cursed be he who smites his neighbor secretly, and all the people shall say Amen."

"Cursed be he who takes reward to slay an innocent person and all the people shall say Amen."

"Cursed be he who confirms not all the words of this law to do them, and all the people shall say Amen."

Now he says look, I want this ceremony to be acted out so you understand you have two choices. You choose the one and you are cursed, Amen, Amen, so let it be. You choose the other and you are blessed. Ebal and Gerizim. What a dramatic scene. In Chapter 28, you have some of the blessings. Verse 2 - in all of these blessings shall come on you and overtake you if you shall harken to the voice of the Lord, and now we go over to Gerizim. Blessed shall you be in the city, blessed shall you be in the field, blessed shall the fruit of your body be and the fruit of the ground, fruit of thy cattle, the increase in thy cows, the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be your basket and your feeding trough. Blessed shall you be when you come in and blessed shall you be when you go out. And so forth.

And so you have blessings. There's further cursing in verse 15, but if you will not harken to the voice of the Lord - now we go back to Mount Ebal again. And if you disobey - verse 16 - cursed shall you be in the city, cursed shall you be in the field. Cursed shall be your basket and your feeding trough; cursed shall be the fruit of your body, the fruit of your land, the increase of your cows and the flocks of your sheep. Cursed shall you be when thou comest in and when thou goest out. And the Lord shall send upon you cursing.

It's that simple, folks. And that dramatic. Now that is followed by one of the most shocking passages of Scripture in the Bible. You can't follow me but listen because I'm going to read you some excerpts. What happens? What happens if you stand in the valley at Shechem and you look on the one side to Gerizim and it's all blessing if you obey and you look on the other side to Ebal and it's all cursing and you make a choice and you say I'm going to choose to do my thing, I'm going to go my way, I'm going to do what I wish, I'm going to disregard God's law, what do you get, what do you gain? You gain cursing.

And from verse 20 on let me read you some of the things the Word of God says. This is the pure Word of God as I share it. Just listen. The Lord will send on you curses, confusion, frustration in all that you undertake to do until you are destroyed and perish quickly on account of the evil of your doings because you have forsake me. The Lord will smite you with consumption, with fever, inflammation, fiery heat, with drought, with blasting and with mildew.

The Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies and - putting in a more modern paraphrase - you shall go out one way against Him and flee seven ways before Him. You shall be a whore to all the kingdoms of the earth; your dead body shall be food for the birds of the air, for the beasts of the earth, there shall be no one to frighten them away. The Lord will smite you with madness and blindness and confusion of mind. You shall grope at noonday as the blind gropes in darkness. You shall betroth a wife and another man shall lie with her. Your sons and your daughters shall be given to another people. It shall not be in the power of your hand to prevent it so that you shall be driven mad by the sight, which your eyes shall see. You shall become a horror, a proverb and a byword among all the peoples where the Lord will lead you away.

All these curses shall come on you and pursue you and overtake you and your descendents forever. Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joyfulness and gladness of heart. By reason of the abundance of all things therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you in hunger and thirst and nakedness and in want of all things and you shall eat the offspring of your own body, the flesh of your sons and daughters whom the Lord your God has given you in the seeds and in the distress with which your enemies shall distress you - remember that at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.?

The most tender and delicately bred woman among you who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground because she's so delicate and tender will grudge to the husband of her bosom to her son and to her daughter her after-birth that comes out from between her feet and her children whom she bears because she will eat them secretly for want of all things in the siege and in the distress with which your enemies shall distress you in your towns. Incredible that a mother would eat the offspring that she had just born. This is the ultimate end of the curse.

If you are not careful to do all the words of this law which are written in this book that you may fear this glorious and awful name, the Lord your God, then the Lord will bring on you and your offspring extraordinary affliction, affliction severe and lasting, sickness grievous and lasting, He will bring upon you all the diseases of Egypt which you are afraid of and they shall cleave to you. Every sickness and every affliction, which is not recorded in the book of this law, the Lord will bring on you until you are destroyed.

And the Lord will scatter you among all people from one end of the earth to the other and there shall you serve other Gods of wood and stone which neither you nor your fathers have known and among these nations you will find no ease in the morning you will say would it were evening and in the evening you will say would it were morning because of the dread which your heart shall fear and the sights which your eyes shall see. You shall offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves but no one will buy you.

That's what God said. That's the choice. And you want to know something amazing? Did Israel gather at Gerizim in their history? The Mount of Blessing? Did they? No. They gathered at Ebal, the Mount of Cursing. And all those things that were prophesied happened; that whole thing is fulfilled in the history of Israel. When God curses, He curses. The Psalms, which we think of as beautiful, sing-able, melodic, comforting, are loaded with curses.

For example: the righteous will rejoice when He sees the vengeance. He will bathe his feet in the blood of the wicked. God will shatter the heads of His enemies. Add to them punishment upon punishment. May they have no acquittal from them, praises the psalmist. Return sevenfold into the bosom of our neighbors the taunts with which they have taunted Thee, O Lord. Let there be none to extend kindness to him nor any to pity his fatherless children. Happy shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock. Do not I hate them that hate thee, O Lord, and do not I loath them that rise up against thee? I hate them with a perfect hatred. I count them as my enemies. So say the psalms.

As it were, re-invoking the curse of Deuteronomy 27-28. This is hard language, isn't it? C.S. Lewis said, quote, "In some of the psalms the spirit of hatred which strikes us in the face is like the heat from a furnace mouth." End quote. R.M. Benson wrote a book in 1901. It was a book on the psalms.

You know what the name of it was? *War Songs of the Prince of Peace*. In that book he said, "No less than 39 psalms are war songs." In 1974 a group of scholars studied the psalms and they concluded that 84 psalms were not fit for Christians to sing. Are they asking us to jettison half the psalms?

These psalms are as divinely authored as those that talk about comfort and salvation. You say what's the point here? The point is this. God is not only loving, God is holy. And just. And righteous. And will act in wrath against sin. That's His nature. He must react that way. He must - listen people - I don't want to spend eternity with the fear that sin might come back again. I want a God who hates it enough to destroy it totally, don't you? Now I want to hasten to add in the psalms there's no thought of vindictiveness in the heart of David. If there ever lived a man who was not a vengeful man, it was David. You know that, don't you? Twice he had the opportunity to kill Saul, didn't he? And Saul had tried to kill him. Twice he had the opportunity to kill Saul and he never did it.

And you remember when Saul died, David, that loving David, gentle David, composed a eulogy - a eulogy to Saul and there was not one single word of reproach in the entire eulogy. David's son Absalom: rebel, vile, evil, hating his father - endeavored to kill his father again and again and again and again. And when Absalom finally died, David didn't say he got what he deserved. David said O, Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! With a broken heart.

When Shimei tried to kill David, Abishai came to David and said, "David, take off his head!" And David refused because David was not a vengeful man. Listen, whenever David invoked the curse of God against anybody it had nothing to do with what that individual had done to David. It had to do with David's zeal for the righteousness and the holiness and the majesty of God. That was the point.

And in Psalm 69:9 David said zeal for your house has eaten me up and the reproaches that are fallen on you are fallen on me. And when David hurt and when David cried to God to act in vengeance against his enemies it was to save the name of God from tarnish, not to save David. There was no selfishness, no self-seeking and no personal vendetta. David just loved God so much he couldn't stand God to be dishonored and he said God you laid down the rules: blessing for obedience, cursing for disobedience, carry it out, God, lest your name be dishonored.

The curses do not only appear in Deuteronomy and they do not only appear in The Psalms, but do you know that the curses appear in the prophets as well? Yes. Jeremiah, for example, was told by God that some people were trying to kill him. This is what he said, "O, Lord of hosts, who judgeth righteously, who trieth the heart and the mind - listen - let me see thy vengeance on them for to thee have I committed my cause."

In other words, Jeremiah said get 'em, Lord, not because they're hurting me, but because I am your anointed, see? To You I committed my cause and if they touch me, they touch your work. Don't let them touch me. And God replied to Jeremiah, "Behold I will punish them, the young men shall die by

the sword, their sons and their daughters shall die by famine and none of them will be left." Later on we find even a more terrible prayer. Jeremiah says, "Give heed to me O, Lord, and harken to my plea. Is evil a recompense for good? Yet they have dug a pit for my life," he says. Doesn't seem fair.

Remember how I stood before you to speak good for them, to turn away your wrath from them? Therefore deliver up their children to famine and give them over to the power of the sword, let their wives become childless and widowed, may their men meet death by pestilence and their youth be slain by the sword in battle. Forgiven not their iniquity nor blot out their sin from thy sight.

You say how can a man of God ever pray such a prayer? How can he ever pray such a prayer? Don't forgive them. Don't blot out their sin? Wipe them out. Because, again, Jeremiah said I have come from You. I represent You to them and they are spiting You, God, and You do not deserve that kind of treatment. Again, it's the zeal for the holiness of God. And God answered that prayer with a promise of horrifying judgment.

He said to Jeremiah, "Behold I am bringing such evil on this place that the ears of everyone who hears will tingle because they fill this place with the blood of innocents, they built the high places of bale to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to bale, they were involved in human sacrifice. Therefore behold days are coming, says the Lord, when this place shall be no more called Tophet or the Valley of Ben Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter. I will give their dead bodies for food to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth and I'll make the city of horror a thing to be hissed at and everyone who passes by it will be horrified and will hiss because of all its disasters and I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and their daughters," etc.

Terrible curse. Terrible curse. Against terrible, terrible evil. Nahum. Nahum uttered a terrible curse on the behalf of God on the city of Nineveh. Nahum said the Lord is a jealous God and avenging - the Lord is avenging and wrathful, the Lord takes vengeance on His adversaries, He keeps wrath for his enemies, the Lord is slow to anger and a great might and the Lord will by no means clear the guilty. Who can stand before His indignation, who can endure the heat of His anger? His wrath is poured out like fire and the rocks are broken asunder by Him. Woe to the bloody city.

Yet she was carried away, she went into captivity and her little ones were dashed in pieces at the head of every street. Judgment on Nineveh. Similarly, Isaiah uttered a terrible curse against Babylon. Behold the Day of the Lord comes cruel with wrath and fierce anger to make the earth a desolation to destroy sinners from it - listen - their infants will be dashed in pieces before their eyes. Their houses will be plundered and their wives ravished. Isaiah speaking against Babel. Now Nineveh, Babylon, Jeremiah's Israel were evil, vile, unconscionable, heinous, sinning peoples and deserved the wrath long ago promised to those who stood at Ebal in disobedience.

These are shocking things; I know they're shocking; they're shocking to me. But listen to Romans 1:18: "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven" against what? "All ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." The wrath of God is released against evil. You say - huh. *Boy am I glad that's Old Testament*. It's not just Old Testament; it's New Testament, too. Turn to Galatians 1 verse 6. "I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ to another Gospel which is not another, but there are some that trouble you and would pervert the Gospel of Christ. But though we are an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you" let him be *what*? "Accursed."

In case you didn't get it, he says it again. "If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed." Paul invokes a curse on anybody who preaches a false Gospel. He declared in 2 Timothy 4:14 that Alexander the coppersmith had done him great harm and he said the Lord will avenge him for his deeds. He cursed him. In Revelations Chapter 6, verse 10 there are martyrs and the martyrs cry out to God and they say, "O, Lord, holy and true, how long wilt thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those that dwell on the earth?"

And in one of the most hard, one of the most difficult statements in the Scripture, Revelations 16:5, "I heard the angel of the water say, 'Thou art righteousness O, Lord, who art and was and shalt be because thou hast judged thus.'" In other words, God must judge to be righteousness and how? For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets and you have given them blood to drink.

Now the last line: and they deserve it. They're getting exactly what they deserve. They deserve it. Final judgment is going to come, the Book of Revelations says in Chapter 18 and verse 20, God is going to come in and wipe out the whole of human society in Chapter 18 and when He does, verse 20, "Rejoice over her, over the fall of the final world system Babylon, rejoice over her thou heaven and behold the apostles and prophets for God has avenged you on her." Rejoice!

Now imagine that. Rejoice. And in Chapter 19 the hallelujahs ring all over the place. Because God has destroyed the evil system. You say well, Jesus wasn't like that. He was so kind. He didn't curse. Oh? Listen to this one. Jesus says on the Day of Judgment I will say to the goats on my left hand, depart from me you, *what*? Cursed. Into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels, and beloved that was just the culmination of warnings He gave throughout his entire ministry.

Luke, in his account of the Sermon on the Mount, talks about blessings and cursings. He takes us, in a way, right back to Ebal and Gerizim. He really focuses on that. And our Lord ends his sermon in Luke's record, in Chapter 10, verse 13, with these words. "Woe unto you, Korazin, woe unto you Bethsaida! For if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it should be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, which are exalted to heaven,

shall be thrust down to hell."

In Chapter 11, verse 39, you know that text. The Lord begins to indict the Pharisees, and he curses them with woe after woe after woe. Terrible, terrible cursing because of the evil, evil, disobedient, rebellious hearts. Even in the 17th of Luke He said to the disciples, "It's impossible but that offenses will come, and woe unto him through whom they come. It were better for Him that a millstone were hanged about his neck that he was cast into the sea than that he should offend one of these little ones." Another woe.

Luke 22:22, "Truly the son of Man goes as it was determined but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed." Woe to Judas. Jesus cursed Judas, he cursed those who offend the little ones, He cursed the Pharisees, He cursed Capernaum, Bethsaida, Korazin, He cursed those rebellious, godless who stand at the judgment on His left hand and depart from me you cursed, He said into everlasting torment. And he told his disciples, when you go somewhere and they don't receive you and they don't receive your message, you shake the dust off your feet and leave. A symbolic act, which leaves them to the curse of God.

Now this is serious business. I mean I just want you to know, folks, that I'm one of those people just like you who was born a sinner, right? I mean I stood for a portion of my life at the foot of Mount Ebal, under the curse of God, along with every other sinner waiting for the vengeance of God. There's no joy in this, there was no joy for any of the prophets.

What is Jeremiah's nickname? What is Jeremiah called? The what? The weeping prophet. Why? Because all of that judgment that he talked about was heart-breaking. Just literally heart-breaking. In the 13th of Jeremiah he says, "If you will not heareth, God says, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eyes shall weep bitterly and run down with tears." God's not happy about that. Not at all. I think of Job. Job wasn't happy in the calamity that came to those he knew. If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me or lifted up myself when evil found me, neither have I suffered my mouth to sin by wishing a curse to his soul.

In other words, he says I've never wished a curse on anybody; I've never wanted to enjoy somebody's suffering. Job didn't - Jeremiah didn't, God doesn't. Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 17, he said, "God, give them double destruction," and then he turned right around in 16 through 18 there and he says, "I have not pressed thee to send evil, nor have I desired a day of disaster, you know that." In other words, I desire that You be magnified, God, it isn't that I want people to be doomed. But in the seeking of the glory of God, sometimes that is an inevitability.

Listen to Psalms 73:3. "For I was envious of the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no pangsin their death but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued with other men." You know it's easy, sometimes, when you look at what

appears to be prosperity in others to want to feel vengeance. And in some of Psalms you maybe get that feeling, but you go earlier in the Psalms, the 7th Chapter and listen to this. "O, Lord my God, if I have done this, if there be iniquity in my hands, if I have rewarded evil to him who was at peace with me, then let the enemy persecute my soul and take it. Let him tread down my life on the earth and lay my honor in the dust."

If I've ever done anything to offend the person that hates me, or that seems more prosperous or better off than me, let me bear his punishment. God, Jeremiah, Job, none of them ever found any pleasure. God says I find no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Doesn't He say that in Ezekiel 33:11? Micah 7, Micah says who is a pardoning God like thee? So gracious in forgiving. John 3:16 says God so *what*? Loved the world.

In God's heart there are tears; in Jesus' heart there are tears; He sat over Jerusalem; he cursed the city and then he - he cursed those cities and then he went to Jerusalem and sat there and that city was equally cursed, it was to be destroyed in 70 A.D. and all the curses of Deuteronomy 28 came to pass and yet Jesus sat over the city of Jerusalem and what did He do? He wept.

But you see because God is holy and God is just and God hates sin and God punishes sinners, because He has to drive it out of His presence so that He can have a kingdom of righteousness, curses have to be there. You say but it seems so tragic. It is. It is. You know there is, today, a curse that exists on the whole of the world right now, but stated in 1 Corinthians 22. This is what it says: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed." If any man loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed.

Now beloved you sum this all up, see. You just pile all this cursing up from Deuteronomy 27 through all the Psalms and all the prophets and Jesus and Paul and the New Testament - you pile it all up and you've got a God of justice and judgment and holiness and vengeance. And we're all just like this because we all know we've sinned, right? We've broken the law. And then we turn to Galatians 3:13. Let's go back. And we find the most incredible, thrilling, wonderful truth. Listen to what it says.

Christ has brought us back from the curse of the law by being what? Made accursed for us. Did you get that? God piled that whole big curse up and said, hey, He said if I vent this curse on those people they're dead. And so he vented the curse on Jesus 43:45 and Jesus was made accursed. So that we could be brought back from the curse.

Now I'll tell you something. We were all cursed. Look at the 10th verse of Galatians 3. For as many as our other works of the law are under the curse 44:12 it is written. Cursed is every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them. Anybody here who has never broken a single divine command in their entire life? Guess not. Then you're cursed. And we can't be justified by the law, verse 11, in the sight of God. We're really in trouble. And God has every right to

vent the fury of his curse against us.

But oh, grace upon grace upon grace. As God poured out the curse on Jesus Christ and he was made accursed for us. And the curse was so crushing, and the curse was so devastating, that Jesus cried, "My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?" You know that's the only time in the entire New Testament record that Jesus ever called God anything but Father. But the relationship was shattered. And cursed. He took the full impact of God's wrath; He bore the curse.

Now beloved, when you come to this table, does it mean something to you? When you're reminded by the bread that this is His body given for you, and you're reminded by the cup that this is His blood shed for you, will you remember that it is the curse that He bore for you? So it is written, "The maker of the universe as man was made accursed."

The claims of laws that He had made unto the uttermost he paid. His holy fingers made the bough that grew the thorns that crowned his brow. The nails that pierced his hands were mined in secret places He designed. He made the forest whence there sprung the tree on whence His body hung; he died upon a cross of wood, yet made the hill on which it stood. The sky that darkened o'er His head by Him above the earth was spread. The sun that hid from Him its face by His decree was poised in space. The spear that spilled His precious blood was tempered in the fires of God. The grave in which His form was laid was hewn in rocks his hands had made. The throne on which He now appears was His from everlasting years but a new glory crowns his brow and every knee to him shall bow.

Why not thou? Can you imagine anything more magnanimous? Anything more merciful and anything more gracious than one who would bear the curse for us? Let's bow together and pray.

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