

Rev. Luke's Weekly Blog

August 14, 2025



FROM SHAME TO VICTORY

Deuteronomy 21: 22-23

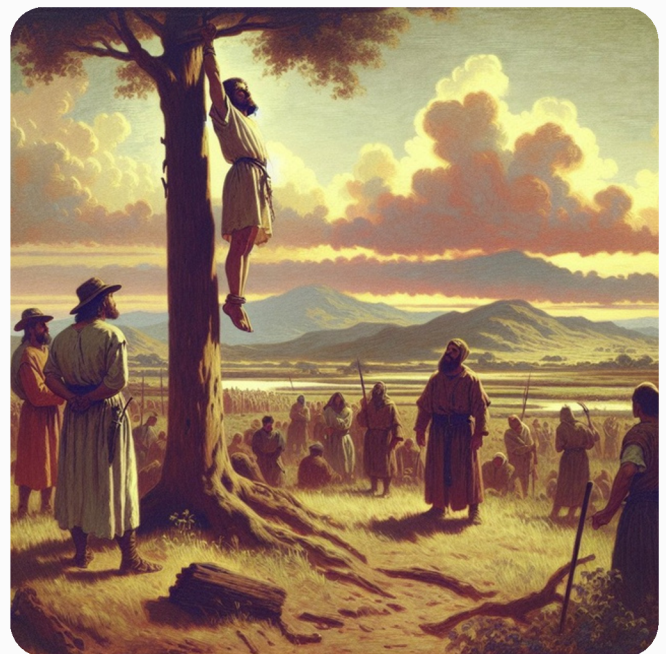
This pericope addresses the treatment of a criminal executed by hanging on a tree. It emphasizes both the curse associated with such a death and the need to preserve the purity of the land.

Deuteronomy 21:23 reflects the covenantal relationship between God and Israel, where obedience to God's law ensured blessing, and disobedience invited cursing. The phrase **cursed by God** speaks of the severity of hanging as a form of execution, reserved for serious offences, signalling divine disapproval and separation from the covenant community. The requirement to bury the body before nightfall highlights God's concern for the sanctity of the land.

The Apostle Paul explicitly connects this to Jesus' crucifixion in Galatians 3:13: **Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us – for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.'** He interprets Deuteronomy 21:23 as pointing to Christ, who, though sinless, took upon Himself the curse of sin on our behalf.

In the first century, crucifixion was a Roman method of execution, but the New Testament writers, steeped in Jewish Scripture, saw the cross as analogous to the **tree** in Deuteronomy. Acts 5:30 and 10:39 describe Jesus as having been **hanged on a tree**, deliberately evoking the language of Deuteronomy to frame His death as the ultimate fulfillment of curse-bearing.

Unlike the criminals in Deuteronomy, who deserved their punishment, Jesus was innocent. **For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, YET WITHOUT SIN** (Heb. 4:15). **For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: who COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH** (1 Pet. 2:22). Yet, He willingly bore the curse of sin: **Surely, He has BORNE OUR GRIEFS AND CARRIED OUR SORROWS; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was WOUNDED FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS, He was BRUISED FOR OUR INIQUITIES; the CHASTISEMENT FOR OUR PEACE was upon Him, and BY HIS STRIPES we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way; and the Lord has LAID ON HIM THE INIQUITY OF US ALL.** (Isaiah 53:4-6).





The fulfillment of Deuteronomy 21:23 in Christ underlines the doctrine of atonement. The curse of the law, which we could not escape due to sin, was borne by Jesus, who became *sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God in Him* (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus Christ's death absorbs the penalty of sin, satisfying divine justice. *For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit* (Romans 8:3-4).

The significance of this fulfillment affirms the sufficiency of Christ's work on the cross. Because Jesus bore the curse, *there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit* (Rom. 8:1). This liberates us from the fear of divine judgment and empowers us to live in freedom, pursuing holiness not to earn salvation but as a response to God's grace.

The cross redefines our understanding of suffering and shame. What was once a symbol of curse and defeat has become, through Christ, a symbol of victory and hope. When we face trials, rejection, or persecution, the cross reminds us that God can transform even the most shameful circumstances for His glory.

The cross also reveals that God's justice does not compromise His mercy; rather, *mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed perfectly in Christ's sacrifice* (Ps. 85:10). *For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified* (Hebrews 10:14).

The cross is our source of hope, a reminder of God's love, and a call to share His grace with the world, trusting in the One who became a curse to bring us blessing.

PRAYER POINTS:

1. Thank God for Christ's redemptive work.
2. Intercede for those still under the curse of sin, that they may see Jesus as the One who took their punishment and offers eternal life.
3. Pray for a life that honours Christ's sacrifice.

Soli Deo Gloria – to God alone be the glory!
Rev. Luke Haisa

