

JEREMIAH

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Jeremiah chapter 5 as we continue our study through the Word of God. Keep in mind that we are looking at Jeremiah's second message to the Southern Kingdom of Judah and this message was given during the reign of King Josiah. This message began in Jeremiah 3:6 and will continue through Jeremiah chapter 6.

King Josiah was a good King, he tried to bring reform to the nation, he tried to bring the nation back to God but it was only a superficial reform. The hearts of the people were still far from God. Yes they went through all the motions of religion but there was no emotion, it was all outward and nothing happened on the inside.

Thus, Jeremiah is calling for them to repent and return to the Lord but his words fell on deaf ears. The people refused to listen and they were not prepared for the coming judgment. They were warned of this judgment, make no mistake about they, they just didn't listen!

Now you might be thinking, "It couldn't be that bad could it?" As you will see as we open up our study this evening, God is going to challenge Jeremiah to find one man in the Southern Kingdom of Judah who "executes judgment" and "seeks the truth" and if there is just *ONE*, then God says, "I will pardon her."

So with that as our background, let's begin reading in Jeremiah chapter 5 starting in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

JEREMIAH 5**VERSES 1-2**

1. As I have said, God challenges Jeremiah to find one person who is just and seeks after the truths of God and if he can find just one then God will pardon them, His judgment will not come upon them. It reminds me of Abraham and his plea with God that if there were only 10 righteous people in Sodom that God would spare the city. And in the end, there was just Lot and his two daughters who escaped the judgment of God. And as we will see, Jeremiah is not going to be able to find even one!

What is the problem? Why is that? Remember what Paul said in Romans 3:10-18, **“As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.’ ‘Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit’; ‘The poison of asps is under their lips’; ‘Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.’ ‘Their feet are swift to shed blood; Destruction and misery are in their ways; And the way of peace they have not known.’ ‘There is no fear of God before their eyes.’”**

That is the problem for man; his sins have separated him from God and even the best person in the world, when compared to a holy and righteous God, *ALL* his righteousness is like filthy rags! Then how can God hold the people accountable? Because God wants them to turn to Him and receive His forgiveness but if they refuse, judgment will come.

We are told in Ezekiel 22:30-31, **“So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one. Therefore I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; and I have recompensed their deeds on their own heads,’ says the Lord GOD.”**

Isn't it interesting that during the time of Josiah, when there was spiritual reform that there was no justice in the land, there was no truth in the land! How can that be? Like I have said, it was superficial, it was a façade! And I think God was trying to show Jeremiah how bad things had gotten in the nation, that the hearts of the people were bent towards evil day and night, and because of that no pardon would come to them.

2. Let me say this. It was not that the people had turned their back on religion, they were very religious. They went to Temple, they used the spiritual jargon of the day as we see in verse 2, **“As the LORD lives”** or as many say today, ***“Praise the Lord!”*** and-so-on. But it was a cloak of righteousness to hide their sin. It is easy to throw out Christian phrases but it is a lot harder to live the Christian life. God wants us to live what we say we believe! In Judah, their words were empty before God and you can't hide that from God, you can't hide anything from God!

VERSES 3-5

1. As I read this I see a man who is broken by what he sees happening with his people. Jeremiah is devastated that the Jews refuse to turn to God even though God is chastening them to draw them back. They are not grieved by what is taking place; they reject any correction because they are doing fine! And the more they move away from God the harder their hearts get towards God and the things of God.

The chastening of God only made them more defiant in their actions. They should have been grieving over their sin; they should have received God's correction by applying it to their life. But they became as hard as a rock, unable for God to penetrate. They refused to return to the Lord.

2. And we see Jeremiah going out and looking for a just man, a man who seeks the truth and he goes to the poor but does not find any there and he sees them as foolish because of this. He goes to the great men, the rich men, the powerful men and it is not any different. They refuse to seek God as well.

It doesn't matter what class of society you are from, how much or little education you have, how smart you are, the heart of man is still the same, **WICKED**; desperately evil and only God knows the depravity of it! When we look at our lives apart from God we think we are doing well and that is the problem as we see here with Judah and with us. We must look at our lives in the light of God and God will expose those areas that need to change and we must obey what He is telling us. God, over and over again tried to wake them up from their spiritual sleep but they refused to hear! May we not close our ears or shut our eyes, harden our hearts to God!

3. Look at what happens because of their refusal to turn to God, to receive the truths of God into their lives!

VERSE 6

1. Remember in verse 5 we are told that Judah has broken the yoke, they have moved away from God! The result of these oxen that are now loose is seen here in verse 6. They are going to be devoured by these wild animals!

You see, because they turned from God, **“Therefore”** this judgment will come upon them and destroy them. Now are these animals that are spoken of here literal or figurative? It is probably both. God will use the Babylonians to come down and bring the Southern Kingdom of Judah into captivity and these wild animals will populate the area when they are gone! So both seem to apply.

VERSES 7-10

1. God throws this question out to them, **“How shall I pardon you for this?”** And just in case they don’t see a problem in what they were doing, God is going to tell them. They turned from God and sought false gods. They have forgotten that God is the one who has provided for them, not these false gods! They not only committed spiritual adultery by seeking these false gods but they were involved in physical adultery with these pagan cultic prostitutes! And as God blessed them they used those blessings to move farther from God and into sin, lusting after **“his neighbor’s wife.”** Thus, God asks them, **“How shall I pardon you for this?”**

Yes God's longsuffering and His patience goes beyond what we can imagine. But one day His judgment will come! You see, He desires to pardon us, to forgive us of our sins but we must turn to Him! And as much as Jeremiah could not find one person who is just, who seeks the truth, we have and His name is Jesus!

Thus, the only way God can pardon us for our sins is when we repent of our sins and we come to Christ asking Him to be Lord and Savior, to forgive us of our sins. It is then that the pardon that has already been paid for can be appropriated into our lives.

It is as Peter said in II Peter 3:9-10, "**The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.**" God's desire is that we are saved!

2. Thus, God was going to bring judgment upon them, He was going to punish them for their wickedness by the hands of the Babylonians, but they were not to completely destroy them. God was going to use this to awaken them out of their spiritual sleep so that they would turn back to Him!

VERSES 11-13

1. Please understand that it was not just one sin that pushed God to bring judgment upon them. God was trying to get their attention by sending them prophet after prophet warning them of the coming judgment. He sent wild animals to attack them. He caused the rains to stop. And they continued to sin and in all that came upon them they said, **“It is not the Lord!”**

How can they say that? Because, like people today, they saw God as a God of love and in their minds He would never do this to His people. And the false prophets were speaking a bunch of hot air that rises up and dissipates; it was nothing more than empty words. It is amazing how a people can live in rebellion against God and think that God accepts that kind of lifestyle, He won't!

2. Look again at verse 13 that is speaking of these prophets whose word is empty, there is nothing to what they are saying, why is that? Very simply, **“For the word is not in them.”** That should be a wake-up call to pastor's today who are not teaching the Word, who are spending more time with illustrations and skits than with the Word of God. God's Word is living and power and it can change lives. Apart from God's Word our words are really empty!

3. Also, people today want to deny the judgment of God, they don't believe it is coming! And it is not only non-Christians who believe that, there are Christians who believe this as well. They don't see God judging sin, they believe that all roads lead to heaven and that is true, but it is only through Jesus Christ that you will remain in heaven.

Apart from Christ you will end up in Hell, not because God sent you there, you chose to go there by rejecting Jesus! You see, God doesn't send anyone to Hell, we go there by choice, and it is not easy. You can ignore the truths of God that people are speaking forth. You can ignore the judgments of God or the consequences of your sins. And if you try hard enough you will make it, you will go to Hell. But don't blame God for that, He has done everything possible to save you from that.

The ***ONLY*** solution to our problem we call sin is Jesus Christ. We first make peace with God because we are at war with God and that peace with God is only achieved by receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of your life. It is then and only then that you can experience the peace of God in your life!

VERSE 14

1. Remember we were told that the false prophets were speaking a bunch of hot air, empty words! But the Lord says Jeremiah is going to speak forth the Word of God and it is not just a lot of hot air, it is a fire that will consume those that reject it! Listen to what Jeremiah is going to tell them!

VERSES 15-18

1. God now tells the Southern Kingdom of Judah what this judgment is all about. That a nation is going to come down upon them, the Babylonians, and they are going to not only take all of your possessions and food, but the city of Jerusalem will be destroyed!

Notice that this mighty nation that is coming down upon them is “**A nation whose language you do not know, Nor can you understand what they say.**” It is bad enough to be taken captive but then placed in a land where you don’t know the language of the people is devastating. I don’t know if you saw the movie Platoon but there is a scene in that movie where an American military outpost is attacked by the Viet Cong at night. They had radio contact with headquarters and they were screaming for help but they lost the battle. And on the other end of that radio all headquarters could hear are soldiers chattering in Vietnamese! The battle was lost but now all they could hear was the enemy and it just made things even worse! That is what the Lord is saying here!

2. Now as devastating as this was going to be we also see here the grace and mercy of God.

“**Nevertheless in those days,’ says the LORD, ‘I will not make a complete end of you.’**”

They deserved death but God was going to spare them even though they would go into captivity for a time.

VERSE 19

1. What is interesting here is that in the land of Israel, in the land that God gave to them they worshiped foreign gods! Now that they are taken into captivity, now that they are removed from their land they seek the God who made them while they are in a foreign land!

2. Now many if not most of us would say, “I would never do that! I would never worship foreign gods! That is just foolish!” But, if you are seeking after the gods of lust, pleasure, materialism, intellectualism or any other god, you are doing the same thing! And if you are seeking these things God will chasten you because He loves you and wants you to return to Him, not half-heartedly but with your whole heart, your whole mind, your whole being!

VERSES 20-22

1. God has given to them a mind to think, a heart to feel, eyes to see and ears to hear and yet nothing is getting through to them. Why is that? The Lord answers that with a question, “**Do you not fear Me?**” and the answer to that is “**NO!**”

They no longer feared God, the One who created the heavens and the earth. And at this point they should have feared God. As much as the sea remains within its borders, Judah refused to remain within God’s covenant limits. They rebelled against Him.

Today, like back then, there is no fear of God. But understand this, one day you will stand before the Creator of heaven and earth and give an account of your life. You will either stand in your own righteousness, which is like filthy rags, or the righteousness that has been imputed into your life by faith, the righteousness of Christ. If you are living in sin, you better fear God!

And that is why God is calling His people foolish, because they have closed their eyes to Him and shut their ears to His Word. This was not God's fault; they refused to respond to God's calling. Ezekiel 12:2 says, "**Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, which has eyes to see but does not see, and ears to hear but does not hear; for they are a rebellious house.**" May we learn the lesson and honor, fear, respect the Creator of heaven and earth and we do that by obeying His Word. You can't say you love Him if you don't obey Him!

VERSES 23-25

1. God has done all these things for them and yet, "**. . . this people has a defiant and rebellious heart; They have revolted and departed.**" This is a heart issue that is manifested in the things that they do and the things that they say! They have no fear of God and because of that they do what they want. And they have forgotten that it is the Lord who gives the rain, brings forth the fruit of the harvest and if you continue down this path of rebellion then it will be that "**Your iniquities have turned these things away, And your sins have withheld good things from you.**" You have brought this on yourself!
2. Please understand that God delights in blessing us but a life of sin will restrict those blessings from flowing into our life. Jude tells us to, "**keep yourselves in the love of God . . .**" How do we do that? Do we try to be more lovable? Do we have to do this or do we have to do that, work our way into the love of God?

No we don't and we can't work our way into the love of God. Then what is Jude talking about? He is telling us to walk in His ways and as you do, as you follow after the Lord, obedient to Him, He will open up the storehouses in heaven and bless you. That is what God is saying here in Jeremiah, it is what He wants to do. It is a heart issue, "**. . . this people has a defiant and rebellious heart; They have revolted and departed.**" Thus, **REMEMBER** where you have fallen or where you were at when you walked with the Lord. **REPENT** of your sins before God. And then, **RETURN** to Him, return to your first love!

VERSES 26-29

1. The Lord is telling them what they have done wrong and again, the conclusion to all of this is, "**'Shall I not punish them for these things?' says the LORD. 'Shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?'**" Make no mistake about it; idolatry is not a "*victimless crime*"! When you turn your back against the Lord and seek after other gods it will be manifested in the ways you treat people, the care, the compassion you have towards people!

We see this in Matthew 24:12 as Jesus said, "**And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.**" And Paul tells us that in the "**last days**" what we will see. He said in II Timothy 3:1-5, "**But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!**"

You see, the love for people grows cold because the love of the world is self-centered and thus, people in the last days “**will be lovers of themselves**” because they have turned their backs on God, the One who shows us what true love is all about!

God’s love is giving in spite of what others may do to you, it is others-centered. We are told in Deuteronomy 10:17-19, “**For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.**”

That is what they were to do and they did the exact opposite because they were “**lovers of themselves**”! Make no mistake about it, evil is like a cancer that will permeate the land if it is not dealt with. Evil people want to make you like them; it makes them feel good about their actions. You see, the light exposes their evil deeds, so they either flee from the light or they try to extinguish the light to make you like them.

Thus, the Lord says, “**‘Shall I not punish them for these things?’ says the LORD. ‘Shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?’**” And the answer is the Lord is going to bring judgment upon them because of their refusal to turn from their wicked ways, their refusal to turn back to the Lord!

VERSES 30-31

1. Notice what those who were to be bringing people to God were doing. The prophets spoke false words and the people loved to hear these false words! The priests ruled by their own power, they did what they wanted. The prophets told the people what they wanted to hear and the priests turned a blind eye to their sin! And as you look at both of these groups the One person missing in both of them is the Lord! And again, the people loved it this way, it made them feel good about going to Hell I guess!

2. We are no different today! As much as the people of Jeremiah's day loved the lies, the deception we see that same mentality today. One writer put it like this,

Unless I am very much mistaken, this is exactly what is happening in the contemporary church. Preaching that entertains more than instructs, soothes more than it convicts, and appeases more than it confronts has become the rule rather than the exception in the evangelical church. What H. Richard Niebuhr (1894-1963) said about the liberals a generation ago can now be applied to the preaching of the evangelical church: "A God without wrath brings men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministration of a Christ without a cross."

- Philip Graham Ryken, Jeremiah and Lamentation, p. 105

How true that is and this kind of garbage is flooding into churches today! We need to get back to the basics, back to the Word of God! We need to fall in love with Jesus all over again, not according to what we want but what God wants; we must worship Him in Spirit and in truth!

3. Let me share with you this other point and it is in regards to judgment. The great evangelist George Whitefield (1714-1770) wrote regarding these passages here in Jeremiah,

As God can send a nation of people no greater blessing than to give them faithful, sincere, upright ministers, so the greatest curse that God can possibly send upon a people in this world is to give them over to blind, unregenerate, carnal, lukewarm, unskillful guides.

- George Whitefield, *The Method of Grace*, pp. 8-11

We need to speak forth the truths of God found in the Word of God with the love of God to a people who are far from God that they may come to God. Simple yes but it is what we are to do and once they come to God we are to build them up in the faith, teach them the Word of God! Not lies, but the truth! We need to present the Gospel message whether people want to hear it or not, we need to preach the Word of God whether people want to hear it or not, this is not an option!

JEREMIAH 6

VERSE 1

1. When you hear the phrase, “*Gentlemen start your engines!*” you know that the start of the Indianapolis 500 is getting ready to start! The warning here is to sound the alarm, let people know that the enemy is coming down upon us and they are coming from the North. This again is speaking of the Babylonians and God is going to use them to bring judgment upon His people, the Southern Kingdom of Judah because they have lost their way!

2. That is interesting to me because I think America has lost her way. In fact, that is not my idea because President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882-1945) said the following at his first inaugural address, “We don’t know where we are going, but we are on our way.”

How sad and true that is. Just look at where we are at today. “What is our purpose in life?” and most people would say something to the effect of pleasing themselves. But our purpose in life is to bring glory to God for we are created for His good pleasure!

Harvard scholar Oscar Handlin wrote the following article back in 1996 called; “The Unmarked Way” and he came up with a similar conclusion. He wrote,

At some point, midway into the twentieth century, Europeans and Americans discovered that they had lost all sense of direction. Formerly, familiar makers along the way had guided their personal and social lives from birth to maturity to death. Now, disoriented, they no longer trusted the guideposts and groped in bewilderment toward an unimagined destination. Wandering in the dark, men and women in all Western societies, stumbling blindly along, strained unavailingly [vainly, uselessly] for glimpses of recognizable landmarks.

- Oscar Handlin, *The Unmarked Way*, pp. 335-355

We are lost, we don’t know where we are going and we need a GPS to direct us. And do you know what a GPS is? *GUIDANCE PER SCRIPTURE* or the Word of God! Remember what Jesus said in John 14:6, “**... ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’**” May we never forget that! If you are lost, look to Jesus, look to His Word and He will guide you! Your destiny depends on which road you take!

VERSES 2-3

1. Now when we think of shepherds we think of nice people, but they really weren't. You couldn't trust them, they would take what they could get from you, they were nothing more than low-life's in the minds of the people. And God is saying that He is going to have these shepherds gather around her, take advantage of her, and He is speaking of the Babylonians, who were a ruthless people. And the Southern Kingdom of Judah will not have any strength to withstand them!

VERSES 4-5

1. Most of the time you wouldn't fight at noon because it was too hot outside and you did not have the cover of night. But God is speaking forth the battle strategy for the Babylonians. They were to strike the Southern Kingdom of Judah in the heat of the day and continue on through the night.

VERSES 6-9

1. Here is a picture of impending doom for Jerusalem by the hands of the Babylonians. It is interesting that a pagan nation is coming down upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah and the Lord is speaking of how wicked His people are, not the Babylonians! The Lord is not only telling the Babylonians when to fight, but also how to fight. They were to cut down the trees to scale the walls of the city of Jerusalem. All of this was coming upon them because of their wickedness.

And look at how devastating this invasion was going to be. The Lord likened it to gathering grapes only this time you keep reaching in for more. You see, when you harvested your grapes you could only go through the fields once, and whatever was left over was for the poor to come in and glean for themselves. And God is saying that when the Babylonians got through there won't be anything left!

VERSES 10-13

1. Notice that it wasn't that God wasn't warning them of the coming judgment; it wasn't that God wasn't warning them about their sin, they just were not interested in the Word of God any longer. It is always a tragic day when the people no longer want to hear God's Word, they want to be entertained, aroused, have their ears tickled and their senses stimulated. They may hear God's Word, but that is where it stops, in their minds and it never sinks down deep into their hearts to be manifested into their actions, their lives.

Paul warned Timothy and us of what is happening with people today, **“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”** II Timothy 4:2-5.

Don't stop sharing God's Word, don't stop speaking God's Word and yes, people may not want to hear it but that is exactly what they need to hear! The end result is that people will look for teachers to tell them what they want to hear and today there is no shortage of them.

As you move away from God, as you move away from His Word as nation and a people you will become morally bankrupt and full of corruption. Any nation or people that turns from God and His Word, this is what will be manifested in their lives!

VERSES 14-15

1. These false prophets were trying to heal the crushing pain of the coming judgment superficially. In other words, the nation had severed a main artery and the prophets of God were warning of the coming death if something is not done. But the false prophets were going around trying to place a Band-Aid on this arterial gusher! “It is just a flesh wound!” as Monty Python would say! But again, this was only a superficial work, inwardly the nation was still bleeding to death!

2. The other problem here is that they were not moved by their sin, they were not embarrassed by their sin, they were not ashamed of their sin. It did not cause them to blush anymore! We have come a long way baby in this area haven't we! You see, our nation is no different, we flaunt our sin, we no longer blush because of it.

What is interesting to me is that the most horrible of sins can be displayed for all to see without remorse, without blushing and yet, when it comes to our faith, standing up for righteousness, many Christians blush, they are ashamed! That should not be.

VERSES 16-17

1. This is a very sad statement by the people of God. God tells them what they need to do and it is very simple, “**... ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls.**” Go back to the Word of God, follow the paths that have been established by God and you will find rest. What a loving God we have but they responded to him by saying, “**We will not walk in it.**” That is a hard heart. God has what is best for our lives and we need to not only listen, but obey!

2. As you look at the Church today we have a large group of people that are trying to re-emerge the Church, find new ways and they are doing this apart from God and His Word. Now that may sound harsh but it is true. If you are doing things, embracing doctrine that is contrary to God’s Word then you are wrong! And because of that we are embracing all kinds of sin in the church and we are not even embarrassed about it, we rejoice in it and that is tragic!

All these new things, new teachings don’t make it good or right! Keep this in mind, if it is new, it is not true, and if it is true, it is not new! God’s Word is complete!

3. Not only did God tell them to go back to the old paths, go back to the Word of God but He also told them that He has set watchmen over them to warn them of the coming danger, the coming judgment and they responded, “**We will not listen.**” Sounds like little kids trying to get their way and in the end, they will lose!

And people today also laugh at the judgment of God coming, even some in the church. But Peter warns us that this will happen in the last days. He said in II Peter chapter 3, “**knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.’ . . . But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.**” II Peter 3:3-4, 10. Judgment is coming against a Christ rejecting world and it doesn’t matter if people agree with that or not, God’s Word will come to pass!

VERSES 18-20

1. God’s own people refused to listen to Him so He speaks to the Gentiles and the dust of the earth to be witnesses of what is coming. Sin is born in our hearts and minds and as we allow it to grow it will be manifested in our actions. That is the bad fruit that is born out of sin and it does not bring honor to God. They rejected the Word of God and thus, they lived accordingly and judgment was coming!

2. Now verse 20 is interesting because here is a people living in sin and yet they are still bringing sacrifices to God, which are meaningless to Him. God does not want our sacrifices; He wants our obedience to Him. Remember what Samuel said to King Saul for disobeying the words of God back in I Samuel 15:22-23, “... ‘Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he also has rejected you from being king.’” God wants us to be obedient and it is out of that our sacrifices are acceptable before Him.

VERSES 21-23

1. Notice the picture that is being painted for them in this judgment. God was merciful to this nation and yet they refused to turn back to Him. So God sends His judgment upon them by the hands of the Babylonians and they were not merciful they were ruthless. All because “they have not heeded My words, Nor My law, but rejected it.”

VERSES 24-25

1. As the Babylonians are gathering around them fear is building up in Judah. They are afraid to go outside the walls of the city. You see, they are not finding rest for their souls because they refused the old paths, to walk where God has called them to walk. Paul put it like this in Ephesians 4:1-3, **“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”**

Paul is calling for us to walk worthy or “after a godly sort” because that is what we are called to do! Now we don’t walk worthy of this high calling by which we have been called so that God will love us more, so that we will earn favor with God because God can’t love us anymore than He already does nor can He love us any less – we are His children! Then why do we walk this way? Because He does love us, we do it, in a sense, out of gratitude and not out of merit! John tells us in I John 4:19, **“We love Him because He first loved us.”** You see, God is the initiator and we are the responder, we respond to His love and we thus, walk accordingly and in Him we have unity within the body of Christ!

VERSE 26

1. The Southern Kingdom of Judah was not ashamed of their sin, they were haughty, they were arrogant and the Lord is telling them that they need to change that attitude. They needed to mourn over what was coming and not only put the ashes on their heads, but they needed to roll in the ashes because this judgment is going to be devastating.

VERSES 27-30

1. Jeremiah is called to test the people just as an assayer tests metals. As God tried to purge the garbage out of their lives, they held on tightly and wouldn't let go. And in the end they were impure; God could no longer use them. The lead was used to remove the impurities from the gold or silver just as God's Word does as the Holy Spirit moves in us. But we can quench the work the Holy Spirit is doing by rejecting God's Word just as the Southern Kingdom of Judah was doing.

Isaiah 1:22 says, "**Your silver has become dross, Your wine mixed with water.**" The picture is this, "It emerges that the people of Judah are not, so to speak, precious metal marred by some impurities, but base metal from which nothing of worth can be extracted." (Derek Kidner) That is how far away from God the Southern Kingdom of Judah had gone!

2. We need to be careful here because we can become self-righteous and look down upon what has happened to others, but by the grace of God we stand. And I don't think we understand how ugly sin really is. I think, like most people today, have no idea that sin is so bad, it is so destructive that apart from Christ we would be dead in our trespasses and sins! Kyle Yates put it like this,

Perhaps some day we may see clearly how unattractive, how loathsome, how useless sinful men are in the sight of a holy God. How we need to look objectively at ourselves to see the miserable emptiness that is so clearly visible to God! There is no point in keeping refuse silver. It has no worth. Can it be that God has already marked off as valueless many who consider themselves useful?

My heart weeps for people who don't see their need for Him. My heart weeps for those people that think they have a relationship with God apart from Jesus. My heart weeps for those who feel by their good works they will enter into heaven. And the tragedy here is that they don't want to listen to what God has said, they have rejected His Word and they are headed for eternity apart from Him!

3. This concludes Jeremiah's second message to the Southern Kingdom of Judah that began back in Jeremiah 3:6. A powerful message to a nation that was turning their backs on God and Judgment was coming.

Let me close this evening with these words from Philip Ryken regarding the people and really the church today, that we are at the crossroads and which road will we take? He wrote,

Western civilization now stands at the crossroads. We have started down the road to destruction, perhaps, but the way of life still stretches out before us. The ethical dilemmas we face show that we are at the crossroads. Will we cherish the lives of the innocent, or will we permit abortion on demand? Will we protect the lives of the defenseless, or will we allow involuntary euthanasia? Will we preserve the sanctity of marriage, or will we tolerate no-fault divorce and homosexual unions? Will we love the true and the beautiful, or will we gaze upon images of sex and violence? These are the questions a culture faces at the crossroads.

The evangelical church is also standing at the crossroads. Will we glorify God in our worship, or will we entertain ourselves? Will we bear witness to the Law of God and the grace of the gospel, or will we tone down our message so as not to offend anyone? Will we expound the eternal Word of God, or will we seek some new revelation? Will we defend the doctrine of justification by faith alone, or will we add works to grace? These are the questions a church faces when it stands at the crossroads. . . .

The thing to do at such times is to recognize that you are standing at the crossroads. Two roads stretch before you. You can go in only one of two directions. Either you can keep going the way you have been going, or you can go down a different road altogether. Your destiny depends upon which road you take.

- Philip Graham Ryken, *Jeremiah and Lamentation*, pp. 108-109

May we, “**. . . ‘Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls.’**” Jeremiah 6:16