

JEREMIAH

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Jeremiah chapter 9 as we continue our study through the Word of God. Keep in mind that starting in Jeremiah chapter 7 and continuing on through Jeremiah chapter 10 Jeremiah is giving this powerful sermon there at the Temple as people were gathering to worship God. Make no mistake about it, this was a very tough sermon but one that needed to be heard and not only heard but applied to their lives.

They were going to the Temple and they were living like the Devil and Jeremiah was calling them on this hypocrisy, on pretending to be someone they were not. Imagine going to church and hearing that, it would not be popular and yet, as you go through God's Word He will convict us of sin so that we can draw close to Him.

The key is not only listening but obeying what the Lord is telling us to do. Like back then, we see today that people don't want to hear the Word of God because of the conviction it brings to their lives and thus, they want to have their ears tickled and they will find people who will tickle their ears, pastors who will give them what they want instead of what they need. We have not learned the lesson!

And because they refused to listen, because they refused to turn to the Lord judgment was coming and Jeremiah is overwhelmed by what is going to happen to his people. We are told in Jeremiah 8:20-22, **“The harvest is past, The summer is ended, And we are not saved!’ For the hurt of the daughter of my people I am hurt. I am mourning; Astonishment has taken hold of me. Is there no balm in Gilead, Is there no physician there? Why then is there no recovery For the health of the daughter of my people?”**

You can just feel the pain, the brokenness of Jeremiah over what is going to happen to the Jewish people because of their rebellion against God. And sometimes the situation is so overwhelming, like here with Jeremiah that we wonder where God is! After the death of his wife Joy, C. S. Lewis wrote about the way sorrow confuses one's relationship with God. In his book, "A Grief Observed" he wrote,

Meanwhile, where is God? This is one of the most disquieting symptoms. When you are happy, so happy that you have no sense of needing Him, so happy that you are tempted to feel His claims upon you as an interruption, if you remember yourself and turn to Him with gratitude and praise, you will be – or so it feels – welcomed with open arms.

But go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that, silence. You may as well turn away. The longer you wait, the more emphatic the silence will become.

There are no lights in the windows. It might be an empty house. Was it ever inhabited? It seemed so once. And that seeming was as strong as this. What can this mean? Why is He so present a commander in our time of prosperity and so very absent a help in time of trouble?

- C. S. Lewis, A Grief Observed, pp. 7-8

Make no mistake about it, we do mourn in this life. There is pain, there is hurt, there is suffering and how can we reconcile this with God who says that He will never leave us or forsake us? Paul put it like this in Philippians 4:6-7, **“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”**

I think many if not most of us know these verses, that is not the problem. How do we obtain this peace that surpasses all understanding? You have to give it to the Lord and Paul tells us what we need to focus on. He says starting in verse 8, **“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”** Philippians 4:8-9.

Focus on the Lord, meditate upon His Word, don't focus on the situation but upon the One who can give you peace through the situation. It is not easy but if you want to experience the peace of God you need to focus on Him. For Jeremiah, he associated himself so much with his people that right now he is overwhelmed at their destruction, what is going to be coming upon them. Storms will come and go but the Lord is the One who brings stability through them.

As we pick up in Jeremiah chapter 9 we see once again how Jeremiah is viewing the coming judgment upon his people. With that said, let's begin reading in Jeremiah chapter 9 beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word this evening.

JEREMIAH 9**VERSE 1**

1. The words of Jeremiah or I should say the heart of Jeremiah reminds me very much of Jesus. As Jesus looked over the city of Jerusalem He cried out, **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’”** Matthew 23:37-29.

Jeremiah did not come with a condemning and accusatory finger pointed at the Southern Kingdom of Judah. He came before them with a broken heart. And keep in mind that Jeremiah is called *“the weeping prophet”* as he wept over what was going to happen to his people because of their refusal to repent and get right with God. For 47 years or more he spoke for God and no one listened. And what he saw tore him up inside, he knew exactly what was coming!

I think that is a good lesson for us to learn. That when we come before people we don't come with a harsh, judgmental attitude but we understand that if it weren't for the grace of God we would all be in trouble. We should weep for the unsaved, not mock them or glory in their destruction. We should weep for their salvation, that they would come to know the living God. May we have that kind of heart!

VERSE 2

1. Now this seems strange. In verse 1 he is speaking of how broken he is over the sin of his people, the judgment that is coming upon them and now in verse 2 he wants to get away to a place in the wilderness. It is like he doesn't want to have anything to do with them anymore.

What is up with that?

Have you ever just had enough and want to get away from everything and everyone? I bet you have and so did Jeremiah. It does not mean that he was right, but this is what he was going through. You see, just as God wanted Jeremiah to minister to His people, He wants the same for us. God has not called us to remove ourselves from this world. We are to minister to the people of this world. We are to be in this world but not of this world.

2. Kyle Yates put it like this in regards to the plight of Jeremiah. He wrote,

This verse reveals a glimpse of a tired, worn, discouraged prophet in one of his lowest moments. It might be called "a passing shadow on a great soul." In his hour of vexation he imagines he would like to break away from people who do not deserve anything of him. How sweet to be relieved of all responsibility and all irritations! He was literally sick of watching the empty, godless, formal substitute for religion. All his days he prayed, loved, preached and warned, only to find the sort of unresponsiveness that seared his soul.

- Kyle Yates, Preaching from the Prophets, p. 143

I don't know about you but I have felt that way at times. You see all the wickedness, all the evil that my family and I are bombarded with every day and you just want to get away. Just get a place at the Heartbreak Hotel I guess but then there is that problem. You see, there are times I get irritated with myself and there is not much I can do about that. It is hard to run away from yourself, I've tried, it doesn't work!

Again, the world is a tough place to live but we can be refreshed in the Word of God opened up to us by the Spirit of God. May we not forget that! The world is looking for answers and God wants to use us to reveal Himself to them, to give them the answers that are only found in Him. May we do that!

VERSES 3-6

1. Because they were not seeking the truth, because they were satisfied in believing lies, they were denying the existence of God. Now that may be hard to believe but think about it. If you are living your life this way, if you are not heeding the Word of God then in reality you don't know Him and your actions show you don't think He exists.

Think about the Southern Kingdom of Judah and what they were doing. Their lives were bent on doing evil and that was the result of turning away from the Lord. And as you turn from the truth, because our heart is so wicked, we will be bent on doing evil and that is what we see with the Southern Kingdom of Judah and it is what we see in our society today! Apart from the truths of God found in the Word of God people will do what they want! They will call evil good and good evil!

2. And notice what God is calling Judah. He is calling them a supplanter or someone who reaches out to trip someone so they can get ahead of them. In other words, He is calling them Jacob and not Israel, not governed by God! That is the attitude of the nation, and it sounds very familiar in the days we are living in. We are not much different. It is hard to trust people today for people are looking out for themselves. One example is seen in those that rip off the elderly with these money making scams and they have no remorse in what they are doing. In a sense it is a dog eat dog world we are living in, but that is not what God intended. And like Judah, our very fabric of society is tearing apart because we have abandoned God. It is Jeremiah said,

“Through deceit they refuse to know me,’ says the LORD.”

3. Let me say this, truthfulness should not be something that we sometimes do and sometimes we don't do. Remember the movie “True Lies”? Did you ever think about that? If it is a true lie it is still a lie! And in our society today we have lost the wisdom to know where truth ends and falsehood begins. Even in the church we see this happening as Ox Guinness wrote,

Contemporary evangelicals are no longer people of truth. . . . A solid sense of truth is foundering in America at large. Vaporized by critical theories, obscured by clouds of euphemism and jargon, outpaced by humor and hype, overlooked for style and image, and eroded by advertising, truth in America is anything but marching on.

With magnificent exceptions, evangelicals reflect this truth decay and reinforce it for their own variety of reasons for discounting theology. Repelled by “seminary theology” that is specialized, professionalized, and dry, evangelicals are attracted by movements that have replaced theology with emphases that are relational, therapeutic, charismatic, and managerial (as in church growth). Whatever their virtues, none of these emphases gives truth and theology the place they require in the life and thought of a true disciple.

- Ox Guinness and John Seel, No God but God: Breaking with the Idols of our Age, p. 18

We need to be people of truth, that people can trust us at our word! Apart from truth are we any different than the world? This may be hard to swallow but if the Devil is the father of lies and you are lying who are you following, the Lord or the Devil? I think you know!

VERSES 7-9

1. Again we see the deception of the people. They are your best friend until you turn your back and then look out. And because of their behavior, because they refused to repent and turn back to God, God said that He will visit His people, and this is not a social call, it is speaking of judgment. In Psalm 89:31-32 we are told, **“If they break My statutes And do not keep My commandments, Then I will punish their transgression with the rod, And their iniquity with stripes.”** They just didn’t believe it and went on living the way they wanted and they were unaware of the coming judgment, not because they were not warned, they just refused to listen!

VERSES 10-11

1. This destruction was the result of Judah not turning back to God and the city, the nation was devastated. And remember what we read in Jeremiah 8:22, **“Is there no balm in Gilead, Is there no physician there? Why then is there no recovery For the health of the daughter of My people?”** There was, God was the One who could bring this healing but they refused to turn to Him and be healed!

VERSES 12-16

1. Keep in mind that when God brought them into the land of Israel it was a land flowing with milk and honey. We are told in Deuteronomy 6:10-15 the blessing that God had for them as they came into the land and the warning of what would happen if they turned from Him. We are told, **“So it shall be, when the Lord your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant - when you have eaten and are full - then beware, lest you forget the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you (for the Lord your God is a jealous God among you), lest the anger of the Lord your God be aroused against you and destroy you from the face of the earth.”**

They had this land that was filled with milk and honey but they rebelled against God and judgment was coming. He was going to send them a bitter and poisonous drink by the hands of the Babylonians. They were going into captivity, many would be killed and their land devastated. Jeremiah saw this before it happened and he is weeping over this.

VERSES 17-19

1. In that culture they would hire professional mourners to mourn for their loved ones and it showed how much you loved that member of your family. And God is saying for them to hire professional mourners, these women to wail for great death and destruction was coming upon them.

And keep in mind that this judgment was not going to be quick, their captivity in Babylon would last some 70 years. And they are to mourn over what is going to take place.

2. As I look at our nation I do mourn over what I see. We no longer blush at sin, we are not outraged by sin but we embrace sin and we flaunt it for all to see. Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of the Allied forces in the Pacific during World War II, stated, "History fails to record a single precedent in which nations subject to *moral decay* have not passed in to political and economic decline." These wise words point to the moral decay that is rotting our nation and the nations around us. Time is short - humanity must pay attention **now!** I wonder if anyone is listening.

VERSES 20-22

1. With all the dead bodies scattered around the city there will be all kinds of diseases, pestilence in this nation. No one is out in the streets because of all that is happening and now this pestilence has entered the homes. There is no escape.

And as we can see, the bodies of the dead are going to be thrown all over the fields like the wheat that is cut down during the harvest. We read of this in Jeremiah 7:32-33, which says **“Therefore behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘when it will no more be called Tophet, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter; for they will bury in Tophet until there is no room. The corpses of this people will be food for the birds of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth. And no one will frighten them away.’”**

This was a devastating judgment that was coming and they could not blame God for this. It was their own sin that brought this upon them and their refusal to turn back to God!

2. As I have said, we need to be mourning for our nation, interceding for our nation and its people. Francis Schaeffer reminds us in regards to this, “with love we must face squarely the fact that our culture really is under the judgment of God. . . . We must proclaim the message with tears and give it with love. . . . It will not do to say these things coldly. Jeremiah cried, and we must cry for the poor lost world, for we are all of one kind. . . . I *must* have tears for my kind.” (Francis Schaeffer, *Death in the City*, p. 71)

May we have that kind of love for people, proclaiming the truth, warning of the coming judgment but it is all done in love and the desire to see people return to the Lord, to see them saved!

VERSE 23-24

1. Isn't it amazing what we glory in, what we hold onto for our security and in the end, it does not help us. Back in the nineteenth century there was a scholar from Padua, Italy who went to visit Oxford. And he was amazed that he did not find one member of this university who knew everything. What he did find though were plenty of know-it-alls! Listen to what he wrote,

Elsewhere I have asked a professor of astronomy some questions regarding anatomy, or botany, and he had the courage and honesty at once frankly to answer, "I do not know". But at Oxford it really seemed as if everybody considered himself equally bound to be a universal, to know everything, and to be able to give some sort of affirmative answer to every question, however foreign it might be to his ordinary and proper pursuits.

There is so much wisdom in answering seasonably, "I do not know", that in a university which has been celebrated, and accounted most wise for nine or ten centuries, I thought for the credit of the place, I ought to get it once, at least, before I went away; so I tried hard, but I could never attain it. Why was this?

- Thomas Jefferson Hogg, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*

The answer is really very simple. Man has a finite or limited brain. And yes, some are smarter than others but compared to our All-Knowing God we know very little and yet we boast in these things. Paul put it like this in I Corinthians chapter 1, **“Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? . . . but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”** I Corinthians 1:20, 23-25.

The Lord is telling the people of Judah and us that we are not to glory in our wisdom, our might, our riches, but we are to glory in the fact that we know God. And the way we can know God, the way we can have a relationship with the Father is through the Son, through Jesus Christ. That is what we should glory in because everything else can be taken away in a second!

That is where our security is found, in Jesus and not in how smart we are or how rich we are or even how strong we are! If your trust is not in the Lord but in worldly wisdom, then death and destruction will overtake you. But if your trust in the Lord your eternal destiny is secure, you don't lose anything but you gain eternity with the Lord! As we are told, **“But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me . . .”**

VERSES 25-26

1. As you read of these nations that God is going to judge you can understand why they are being judged. We see the immorality, the worship of false gods and-so-on that was going on in these nations. What is surprising is that God puts the Southern Kingdom of Judah into that same judgment. He is judging them with the Gentile nations.

And don't miss the point. They were circumcised and thus, they saw themselves as being okay with God. But their hearts were far from God and God says that it is not the cutting away of skin that saves you but the cutting away of the hardness from your heart; it is coming to the Lord that saves.

And make no mistake about it; the Jews were very proud of their religious practices. But listen to what Paul said in Romans 2:28-29, **“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.”**

I think theologian Charles Hodge sums up what was going on in the nation at that time and how it plays out in our lives even today. He wrote, “Whenever true religion declines, the disposition to lay undo stress on external rites is stressed. The Jews when they lost their spirituality supposed that circumcision had the power to save them.”

And that truly applies to us today. Listen to how Donald Grey Barnhouse updated these verses for us today. He said, “For he is not a Christian who is one outwardly, nor is that ‘church membership’ which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Christian who is one inwardly; and ‘church membership’ is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.” You see, God wants our heart and as we our heart to Him we then, out of a love relationship, not the Law, love to please Him.

For Judah, God places them in the same category you might say as these uncircumcised pagan nations. Why would He do that? Because they were no better, in fact they were worse, because they should have known better, they had received the Words of God and they turned from it. Yes, they were circumcised according to the covenant that God made with Abraham, but God didn't want the ritual but the reality, He wanted their hearts circumcised, sensitive to Him.

2. As we move into Jeremiah chapter 10 keep in mind that this is the conclusion of the sermon he gave at the Temple that began back in Jeremiah chapter 7.

JEREMIAH 10

VERSES 1-2

1. One of the things the Gentiles were involved in was worshiping the host of heaven, they were into astrology or fortune telling by looking at the stars, the planets. They looked to the stars to tell them if it was going to be a good day or a bad day, and Judah embraced these things also.

2. Listen to the definition of idolatry that theologian David Wells gives to us, it is good. He wrote, "trusting some substitute for God to serve some uniquely divine function. . . . These substitutes need not be supernatural; money, power, expertise, the location of the planets on the astrological charts, and a belief in Progress are among the most popular idols of Our Time." Why is that? Because we are attracted to them, they seem good but they take us away from God!

3. One article made these comments about astrology,

Astrological philosophy is based on the occult worldview that asserts “as above, so below.” According to this view, everything in the universe is one and is connected; therefore, the patterns of the planets reflect our lives on earth. As a former astrologer, I can tell you that although many astrologers scorn horoscope columns as “pop” astrology of little value, the astrological worldview is essential even to the writing of a horoscope. When you read such a column, you are in a subtle way either accepting that worldview or assigning some kind of value to it.

The belief that the patterns and movements of the planets, sun and moon reflect our lives is contradictory to the view of a living, omniscient God who created the heavenly bodies to reflect and proclaim His glory, not ours. Astrology also is often intertwined with the teaching that since we are all connected to the universe by a force or energy (which is sometimes considered to be divine or to be God), then everything in the universe is one and therefore, there is no true distinction between man and nature; this is called monism (all is one and one is all). Identifying God as one with the universe is pantheism (God is all, all is God) or is sometimes panentheism (God is contained within the universe), and is totally at odds with the belief in a Creator who created the world out of nothing and is distinct from His creation. God is present in the world and transcends it, but He is distinct from it.

Since astrology is an occult practice of divination severely condemned in God's word, even horoscope columns are rooted in the occult. They may be marketed in trendy magazines with the latest slang, but this packaging is deceptive. If you take reading horoscopes lightly or "in fun," you are denying that the occult is forbidden or possibly dangerous. As someone who was involved in this and related areas for a number of years, I can attest to the dangers inherent in these practices. In the Deuteronomy passage, God warns us against divination, sorcery, spiritism and interpreting omens; such systems are not from Him. To read horoscopes is to take God's word lightly and is trifling with the occult.

- http://www.christiananswersforthenewage.org/Articles_Horoscope.html

God says it is wrong and thus, we need to heed his warning to us. Horoscopes, astrology and-so-on are doors to the occult and we need to stay away from them. God warned Judah and He is warning us!

VERSES 3-5

1. The idols they began to worship were the works of men's hands. They were cut out of wood, they were made out of metals, and so they wouldn't fall over they had to be nailed to the ground. And think about these false gods. They can't speak, they can't think, they can't walk, they can't do anything. And most importantly, they can't save us from sin! Some gods! And God likens them not to a stationary and immobile palm tree, but a better translation is He likens them to scarecrows in a cucumber field! In other words, they are nothing, don't fear them, don't worry about them, and most of all don't worship them!

2. Now don't think we are more advanced today and we don't have idols. We probably have just as many or more than back in Jeremiah's day. Dick Keyes shows us that most Christians have dozens of idols as he wrote,

In this society, our idols tend to be in clusters. They are inflationary, have short shelf lives, and change, adapt, and multiply quickly as if by mitosis, or cell-division. An idol can be a physical property, a person, an activity, a role, an institution, a hope, an image, an idea, a pleasure, a hero – anything that can substitute for God.

- Dick Keyes, The Idol Factory

There is nothing wrong with things, like with sports teams unless these things have you consumed for their attention or take you away from the Lord. If they do then they are an idol in your life. As we continue on we will see who we are to focus upon, the One who can help us, the One who can save us from our sins!

VERSES 6-7

1. Jeremiah points out that there is no other God like our Lord. He deserves all the honor, He deserves all the glory. But God's people were insensitive to what God was saying and they were foolish in their actions by worshiping the works of men's hands. Again, we need to be careful who or what we are worshiping, may it be the true and living God!

VERSES 8-9

1. The idols, before they were hammered into the figures the people wanted, were transported as flat plates. Then they were beaten, hammered, dressed with elegant clothing and worshiped. And the Lord says that these people that worship these idols are “**dull-hearted and foolish.**” The idea here is that instruction received from idolaters is as worthless as the idols themselves. Again, very foolish! Then what should we do? Let’s read on and see, you know the answer.

VERSES 10-13

1. We see this comparison from false gods, these idols to the true and living God. These false gods can do nothing and the true and living God can do all things. And when you think about it, the gods they worshiped were always inferior to the people that worshiped them. These gods couldn’t speak, hear, move, interact with anyone. Yet, the true and living God is the creator of heaven and earth. He is all powerful. He is all knowing. His presence fills the universe. Thus, if you reject Him, you will experience His wrath, which is about to be poured out upon a Christ rejecting world.

2. Now verse 11 is interesting to me. “**The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens.**” Is this speaking of these idols that were made or is it speaking of the people who not only made them but worshiped them? I think it is speaking of the people, they will be judged because these idols are nothing to begin with.

And look at how this is played out today, not only in the world but in the church. The New Age teachings, the faith teachers, the seeker friendly churches, the emergent churches and even the purpose driven churches are speaking about us being god and we are not!

Pay attention to what God is saying here. He is saying that if you think you are a god, if you call yourself a god, and you have not created the heavens and the earth like the true and living God has, you will perish! I wish more people would wise up to this lie of Satan that was started in the Garden of Eden when he told Eve that she could be like God.

3. The heavens and the earth and all life were created through the spoken word of God! He did this, He stretched out the heavens. He put all this together and He is in control of all of it! Our God is not some stone or metal statue, He is living and He is powerful and He loves us so much that He died for our sins so that we may live with Him!

VERSES 14-16

1. The Lord wants them to think about what they are doing, the foolishness of worshipping these idols who can't do anything but be a paperweight I guess! And when the judgment of God comes upon these people none of these gods will be able to save them because they are not real, they can't do anything!

2. Now, in comparison, we see the true and living God who can save. **“The portion of Jacob”** that is spoken of in verse 16 is the Lord. In other words, they worshiped the works of men’s hands and the Lord was not their portion. How foolish and yet people do that today. They worship the work of men’s hands instead of the true and living God, the One who can save them from their sins!

VERSES 17-18

1. What is the Lord saying here? He is telling them to pack their bags because they are going to be removed from the land. The judgment of God was coming by the hands of the Babylonians and this judgment is coming and it would be sudden and now there was no escape from it, they had passed the point of no return.

Derek Kidner put it like this, “Suddenly there is the sheer drop from the pinnacle to the depths: from the thought of Israel as God’s own treasure to the pathetic sight of her as a refugee leaving the ruins for the road.” (Derek Kidner, *The Message of Jeremiah: Against the Wind and Tide*, p. 57)

2. Jeremiah is now going to speak of this judgment as viewed from the eyes of his people.

VERSES 19-20

1. In that culture and even today with the Bedouins, the women and the children would set up the tents. The men sat and watched, told them where to set it up. Now the men were complaining that there was no one left to do that, their homes couldn't be fixed up. It is sad when you take your eyes off the Lord; the focus is then placed upon self, even in times of utter destruction that is happening around you, as is the case here.

VERSES 21-22

1. I don't believe that this is speaking specifically of shepherds who oversee sheep in the literal sense. I think the Lord is speaking of the spiritual leaders, the religious leaders who were to lead the people in the things of God and yet we are told that they “**. . . have not sought the LORD.**”

You see, Judah's leaders had become dull-hearted, insensitive to the things of God. Because the leaders had not sought God with their whole heart they would not prosper with the growth of their flocks. Instead the shepherds would lose their flocks. The people would be scattered like sheep and that is exactly what happened

Judgment was coming from the north, the Babylonians were going to devastate the land, and the land would become desolate!

2. What is the result today of pastors not teaching the Word of God or editing the Word of God to make it say what they want? Sin will become rampant within the church! Rodney Clapp put it like this in his book, *Families at the Crossroads*, “the common Western frame work of values about marriage, divorce, acceptable popular entertainment and so forth has broken down.” And the result of that, “The postmodern world is a fragmented world, more and more populated with isolated and drifting individuals.”

In other words, the fabric of society is falling apart; it is being torn apart because we don't know what is right and what is wrong any longer. What was going on in Jeremiah's day is going on in our day and the only solution is for us to repent and get right with God as individuals and as a nation!

Pastors need to teach the Word of God as the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. We have so many Christians today that are not equipped because they are not taught and they are not studying the Scriptures on their own. May we get back to the basics!

Remember what we read in Jeremiah 6:16, “**Thus says the Lord: ‘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. . . .’**” What are these old paths that the Lord is talking about? Very simply, these paths are a belief in God and a belief in the infallibility of God's Word!

And the problem is simple. The last part of Jeremiah 6:16 says, “**... But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’**” Too many people, so called Christians refuse to walk in the ways of God and thus, they refuse to walk with God. And the consequences of rejecting God and His Word are found in Jeremiah 6:19, “**Hear, O earth! Behold, I will certainly bring calamity on this people - The fruit of their thoughts, Because they have not heeded My words Nor My law, but rejected it.**” May we heed the warnings and draw close to God and obey His Word!

VERSES 23-25

1. How true a statement that is, if man was left on his own without the Lord directing him he would remain lost, dead in his trespasses and sins! And I think that Jeremiah is speaking not only about himself, but the whole nation. He recognizes that judgment was coming so he asks God to have mercy upon them, not to wipe them out completely.

Yes they needed to be corrected, but not more than they deserved. And when you think about it, God does hold back, His mercy is great, we don't get fully what we deserve! Remember what Jeremiah said in Lamentations 3:22-23, “**Through the LORD'S mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.**” I am so thankful for His mercies and His compassion!

2. Keep in mind that Jeremiah just got done asking God not to be angry with them and now he is saying that if you are going to get angry do so against the Babylonians. Pour out your fury upon them for coming against God's people harshly, for going overboard. And God did judge the Babylonians for what they did.

3. As I close this evening keep in mind that Jeremiah has just spent the last 4 chapters speaking to the people as they were going to Temple. But his words fell upon deaf ears. They refused to acknowledge their sin and get right with God.

And what did Jeremiah get out of all this? In chapter 20 he is struck, he is hit and then they put him into stocks, they imprisoned him. In chapter 38 he is placed in a prison, a pit, filled with mire. It is not always easy to speak forth the Words of God, but it is truly necessary.

Peter admonishes us **“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.”** I Peter 3:15-17. May we always be ready to give a defense, a reason why we believe in the living God to all who ask! May we not be conformed to this world but may we be transformed by the renewing of our mind as we read the Word of God and the Spirit of God opens it up to our hearts and our minds.