

JEREMIAH

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Jeremiah chapter 15 as we continue our study through the Word of God. In our last study we once again saw the coming judgment upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah for their sin, their idolatry, their turning from God and their refusal to repent and get right with God.

And we saw Jeremiah intercede before God for the people; for the nation and we saw the people crying out to God regarding this but there was no real turning back to God. Now as we begin chapter 15 we are going to see God answer the pleas of Jeremiah and the people and the answer He gives to them seems harsh. It seems out of character for God but of course it is not. God is light and there is no darkness in Him at all and thus, all that He does is right, it is just!

So with that as our background, let's begin reading in Jeremiah chapter 15 beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

JEREMIAH 15

VERSE 1

1. Here we see the two heavy hitters of intercessory prayer. Moses and Samuel had a heart for intercessory prayer. When Moses went up to get the commandments of God, Israel was willfully breaking the covenant they had made. And the Lord said to Moses that this stiff-necked people, ***YOUR PEOPLE*** Moses, are going to be destroyed.

And here we see the heart of Moses beginning in verse 11 of Exodus chapter 32. We read **“Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said: LORD, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, ‘He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth’? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.’ So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people.”** Exodus 32:11-14.

We also see the heart of Samuel as he intercedes for the people in I Samuel chapter 12. We are told beginning in verse 20 of I Samuel chapter 12, **“Then Samuel said to the people, ‘Do not fear. You have done all this wickedness; yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart. And do not turn aside; for then you would go after empty things which cannot profit or deliver, for they are nothing. For the LORD will not forsake His people, for His great name’s sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you His people. Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way. Only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you. But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king.’”** I Samuel 12:20-25. Samuel saw it as a sin not to pray for the people, no matter how wicked and rebellious they were!

2. But what we see here is that intercessory prayer is not going to work, God says it has gone just too far and He is no longer going to hear their prayer. And to drive home that point he says that even if it was the prayer of Moses or Samuel it would not stop the judgment that was coming upon them for their sin. They were going into captivity and have passed that point of no return!

Now that seems out of character for God and yet, what God is doing is just, it is right and He is going to show them why they have passed that point of no return, they have gone too far! Let's read on and see what the Lord has to say.

VERSES 2-4

1. Now before we talk about these four judgments of God upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah, let's look at what they did to provoke God to pour this judgment upon them. If you remember from our study of Kings and Chronicles, Hezekiah was a good King, one of six good Kings the Southern Kingdom of Judah had. The Northern Kingdom of Israel had no good Kings. And at one point God told Isaiah the prophet to go and tell Hezekiah he needed to get his house in order, he was going to die.

And upon hearing those words, Hezekiah took it like a man and began to cry like a baby. And he pleaded with God to extend his life. And so before Isaiah makes it out of the courtyard, God told him to go back and tell the King his request has been granted and he will have another 15 years to live.

Now three years into that extended period of time, Manasseh was born, and he was one of the most wicked Kings the Southern Kingdom of Judah ever had. His reign lasted 55 years, and just to get an idea of how bad it really was, turn to II Chronicles chapter 33, and let's begin reading in verse 1.

We are told, “Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. But he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down; he raised up altars for the Baals, and made wooden images; and he worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. He also built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, ‘In Jerusalem shall My name be forever.’ And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. Also he caused his sons to pass through the fire in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom; he practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft and sorcery, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. He even set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon his son, ‘In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever; and I will not again remove the foot of Israel from the land which I have appointed for your fathers-- only if they are careful to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses.’ So Manasseh seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel.” II Chronicles 33:1-9.

God said that Manasseh had led the people to a place that was worse than the Gentile nations they drove out. Now we do see a glimmer of light in Manasseh because at the end of his life he did turn to the Lord, He was saved. In that you can see the awesomeness of God's grace. We all have hope! But even though he was able to turn his life around, the nation was in a tail spin towards destruction from which they never fully recovered. And so because of what Manasseh did, leading the people down this destructive path, God brought judgment upon them. In order to build them up God was first going to bring them down.

God did not just lose His temper and bring His judgment upon them. God was patient, He was longsuffering, He sent them prophet after prophet warning them of what would happen if they refused to turn from their sin and return to Him. But they refused to listen and now they had passed the point of no return, judgment was coming upon them for their sins!

2. Here in verse 2 we see four judgments of God. Some are going to die by pestilence, (the word "**death**" here implies the idea of death by pestilence). Some will die by the sword. Some will die by famine. And some will be taken away captive.

And like I have said, this chastening, this judgment was to refine them and free them from the bondage they were in; they no longer went into idolatry! God does the same with us, He will chasten us to purge the garbage out of our life, refine us to make us more like Him.

VERSES 5-7

1. God is asking some rhetorical questions here with the answer being, "No one!" No one is going to care what happens to you in the sense all those nations you went to for help, all those gods you went after and worshiped, they are not going to care what happens to you.

Now here is the clincher to make them understand that there is One who loves them and that is the Lord! The One they turned their back on loves them and even with this judgment, He still loves them. You see, sometimes judgment comes because He loves us and does not want us to go down that path any longer.

And keep in mind, like I have said, God was patient with the Southern Kingdom of Judah, He was long-suffering, He could have wiped them out a lot sooner, but He didn't. But now judgment was coming.

VERSES 8-10

1. Here is a picture of a nation who has been cut down in her prime. She should have continued on, but she was destroyed, but not completely destroyed. And as Jeremiah sees all that is going to happen to the Jewish people, after all God had said, Jeremiah is overwhelmed! Let's face it, who wouldn't be?

2. This is the message that Jeremiah is bringing to the people. Jeremiah was only telling the people what God wanted him to say. And their response to what Jeremiah said is that they hated him for that message.

And we see here in verse 10 that Jeremiah is saying he did not deserve that kind of treatment. He didn't have money lent to him and not pay the person back. Nor has he given money to others charging them high interest rates. He only spoke the Words of God and this is the response that he gets in return, they hated him. And Jeremiah comes to the conclusion that it would have been better if he wasn't even born!

3. I think people get into ministry many times with the wrong outlook. They think everyone is going to love them, praise them; we are all working together for the cause of Christ and in the end, stuff happens and people don't love you.

Ministry can be very tough. Sometimes your worst enemies, your worst critics are your own family, even in the body of Christ. It can be tough standing up for the truths of God, for what is right and especially to lead a people who are against you. That is where Jeremiah was at and he was having a difficult time with it.

Let me share a few things with you that hopefully will help those of you who are in ministry. Before I do let me first ask you a question. How many of you are in ministry? If you didn't raise your hand you are either not a Christian or you are a Christian and you are unaware that we are all in the ministry, we are all serving the King.

Pastor Sandy Adams from Calvary Chapel Stone Mountain in Atlanta, Georgia shared some of these principles with us a few weeks ago and I think they are principles that help keep us focused and on track as we serve the Lord. They are principles that help us finish the race strong.

- A. ***Love always flows down*** – You will never be loved more than you love others. When you understand that you won't be disappointed in how people respond to you.
- B. ***The healing is in the loving*** – What I mean by that is that you need to let things go or they will eat at you and finally consume you. I don't care what someone has done, love them and let the healing take place.
- C. ***Never sacrifice your family on the altar of ministry*** – This is really very simple and yet many make this mistake. Your family comes before ministry and if you get that out of order you will have problems. People will come and go but your family is what you go home to!
- D. ***What is over my head is still under God's throne*** – In other words, God is in control of our life and situations. Nothing is too difficult or beyond His reach. Never forget that.

There are more but keep those things in focus and you will not go astray and the ministry you are in, the one that God has for you will grow.

4. Now as hopeless as this looks God is gracious and He is merciful and even in the judgment we see the love of God for His people. God has a remnant that loves Him.

VERSES 11-14

1. In the midst of all this judgment of God for the sins of His people, God has His faithful remnant that He will see through this time of judgment and captivity. God promises Jeremiah that He will protect him. And for Jeremiah, he will not go into captivity.

In Jeremiah 40:2-4 we read of what happened during this assault and captivity by the Babylonians. We read, **“And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah and said to him: ‘The LORD your God has pronounced this doom on this place. Now the LORD has brought it, and has done just as He said. Because you people have sinned against the LORD, and not obeyed His voice, therefore this thing has come upon you. And now look, I free you this day from the chains that were on your hand. If it seems good to you to come with me to Babylon, come, and I will look after you. But if it seems wrong for you to come with me to Babylon, remain here. See, all the land is before you; wherever it seems good and convenient for you to go, go there.’”**

God spoke to the captain of the guards from Babylon and he is telling Jeremiah that he was free because of his faithfulness, and the rest of the people will be taken away captive for their wickedness. Even in a seemingly hopeless situation God still works powerfully!

And we see the Lord speaking of the powerful Babylonian army coming from the north, coming down upon them and bringing the nation into captivity. You see, they worked so hard for all their possessions and God says because of their wickedness, He was going to give it all away.

VERSES 15-18

1. It is so easy to get discouraged, depressed, down at times when trouble comes our way and we see here that Jeremiah is just reminding God what He had promised him, that he won't be taken away captive even though God had already spoken these words to Jeremiah.

2. Keep in mind that the Law of God was lost for some 60 or 70 years. During the reign of Manasseh the Temple was just a huge storage dump for their idols and the Word of God was covered up by them. And then during the spiritual reform of Josiah he commissioned the Temple to be cleaned up. And as they began this project, Hilkiah, the father of Jeremiah, found a copy of the Law of God. And as Josiah read it he tore his clothes and wept because he realized how much they had transgressed the Laws of God.

And here in Jeremiah 15:16 we see what Jeremiah did when these Words, the Words of God were found, **“Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts.”** Job felt the same way as we are told in Job 23:12, **“I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth More than my necessary food.”** And Jesus said in Matthew 4:4, **“... ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.””**

You see, it is in the midst of judgment, in the midst of persecution, in the midst of trials that God's Word gets us refocused and sets our heart at peace! Too often today we take for granted God's Word. We can go into most book stores and purchase all kinds of Bibles. The thing we must ask ourselves is this; does the Word of God still bring to us that joy that it did when we first got saved? If the answer is no, then you need to repent and ask God to give you that love once again, that the Word of God might become precious to you and fill you with great joy.

3. As we see in verse 17, which flows right out of verse 16 obviously, is that Jeremiah had separated himself from the wicked people. He was in this world, but not of this world. God's Word brought Him to this place.

The same idea comes across in Psalm 1:1-3, which says, "**Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.**"

Do you see the downward progression here if you don't delight yourself in the Law of the Lord? First we see the person **WALKING** with the ungodly. Then they move from walking with them to **STANDING** with the sinners, hanging out with them. And then finally we see them **SITTING** with the scornful. Don't go down that path but **DELIGHT** yourself in the Law of **GOD! MEDITATE** upon the Law of **GOD!** That is where life is found, abundant life!

4. Now how quickly our focus, our attitude can change. Listen once again to what Jeremiah 15:18 says, **“Why is my pain perpetual And my wound incurable, Which refuses to be healed? Will You surely be to me like an unreliable stream, As waters that fail?”** How can Jeremiah be at peace with God one minute and then make these accusations against God the next minute?

Because we are a fickle or erratic people and we let situations change our focus instead of the Word of God which will keep us running steady! God is going to speak to Jeremiah and correct his outlook but the key here is being able to surrender to God. Some of you may remember this story but it does drive home the point. We are told,

The captain of a ship looked into the dark night and saw lights in the distance. Immediately he told his signalman to send a message: “Alter your course 10 degrees south.”

Promptly a return message was received: “Alter your course 10 degrees north.”

The captain was angered. His command had been ignored. So he sent a second message: “Alter your course 10 degrees south - I am a captain.”

Soon another message was received: “Alter your course 10 degrees north. I am seaman third class Jones.”

Immediately the captain sent a third message, knowing the fear it would evoke: “Alter your course 10 degrees south - I am a battleship.”

Then the reply came: “Alter your course 10 degrees north - I am a lighthouse.”

- Source Unknown

God is our lighthouse and we need to look to Him to guide us even in the severest of storms and they will come! You see, we are like a battleship headed for destruction unless we listen to the warning of the lighthouse. What is that warning? Let's read on and see what the Lord is saying to Jeremiah and to us.

VERSES 19-21

1. The Lord here is saying, "Jeremiah, you question Me? You complain to Me? But if you'll come back to Me, I'll make you like a brass wall. I'll be your strength. I'll see you through. Then you'll be able to extract the precious from the vile - you'll be able to find the good even in hard times."

The word "**return**" is SHUWB, (shoob) in the Hebrew and it carries with it the idea of, "to turn back, turn oneself, turn around, return, a spiritual return to the Lord." In other words God is telling Jeremiah to repent and return to Him. And when you do these things don't go back to the people, let them come to you and then speak the Word of God to them. If he didn't, God couldn't use him!

G. Campbell Morgan sums it up like this, "Let him purge his heart of such dross, and devote himself only to the gold of the truth about God. So and only so would he be fitted to be as the mouth of God in uttering His messages."

2. I am not sure why but so often we see ministry as being easy, a piece of cake and when it is hard, when it is difficult, when it doesn't go the way we want it to we drop out and think that God was no in it. Ministry is not easy, it is tough.

Remember what the Lord said in Jeremiah 12:5, **“If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, Then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, In which you trusted, they wearied you, Then how will you do in the floodplain of the Jordan?”**

God speaks forth with two metaphors here. The first one dealt with running and if Jeremiah felt it was difficult to run with the footmen then he is going to have trouble running with the horses! What does that mean?

The footmen were a picture of his hometown or the Southern Kingdom of Judah itself and the trouble he was facing and if this was too hard for him, when the Babylonians come in, the horses, he will not be able to contend with them.

The second one dealt with a time of peace and if this has been difficult for you while Jerusalem is still standing, in this time of peace, then how will you stand when the Babylonians come in and destroy this city and take the people captive?

Now as tough as it was going to get for Jeremiah and as tough as it will get for us, how are we going to stand strong. I may be able to keep pace with the footmen but with horses, no way? So how can I accomplish this, how can you accomplish this? Only in the Lord and taking comfort, resting in the promises that are found in God’s Word!

In other words, our strength comes from the Lord. He helps us to keep pace with the horses you might say. He helps us to stand strong in the midst of turmoil. He is our strength! May we ***NEVER*** forget that!

3. So the Lord is telling Jeremiah that it is not going to be easy but if you draw close to Him, He will strengthen you. In a sense God is saying, “You just stay on the firing line and I will take care of you.” You see, God won’t exempt us from the difficult times, but He will give us the grace to go through them. As Paul said in I Corinthians 15:58, “**Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.**”

And it is not going to be easy as we will see in the next chapter. Jeremiah is going to have to make some very difficult sacrifices in his life and it will not be easy!

JEREMIAH 16

VERSES 1-4

1. As I read these verses I believe it is speaking about the dark days that were coming for the Southern Kingdom of Judah. And as God speaks to Jeremiah he is listening. That is important, we need to listen to what the Lord is saying and as I have said, the Lord primarily speaks to us through His Word and all that He says to us has to be filtered through His Word. You see, you have to be able to discern what is from God and what is of the flesh or the devil and God’s Word will show us.

2. The Lord tells Jeremiah in these verses not to marry; he is not to have any children. Keep in mind that when Jeremiah began this ministry he was a young man and not to marry and have children was not the common practice in those days. Why would God do that?

He tells us very clearly in verse 4. When the Babylonians come down upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah they will destroy families, it will be very gruesome. It will be so bad that the dead will not even be buried and that was a great dishonor to the Jew. And God was warning Jeremiah not to put his family through all of this, don't get married and thus, don't have children.

We see this played out in Psalm 137:8-9, **“O daughter of Babylon, who are to be destroyed, Happy the one who repays you as you have served us! Happy the one who takes and dashes Your little ones against the rock!”**

Make no mistake about it, warfare is horrible and to think you can have a war without the innocent being affected just shows that you are a fool. Not only were the pregnant Jewish women killed, but their babies were cut out of their wombs and smashed against the rocks. And the Psalmist is calling for Babylon to have done upon them what they did to the Jews. It is called the law of retribution. Paul puts it this way in Galatians 6:7 when he said, **“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”**

Also, we see this played out for us in Isaiah 13:16 as God says this about what will happen to Babylon, **“Their children also will be dashed to pieces before their eyes; Their houses will be plundered And their wives ravished.”** And, as Cyrus the Great, leader of the Medo-Persian Empire came into power, he had his general do to the Babylonians what they did to the Jews. God is not mocked, the Babylonians were God's instrument of judgment upon the Jews but they went too far with their brutality, and God paid them back.

VERSES 5-9

1. Now this is interesting. Jeremiah is told not to lament, not to mourn over the dead. That seems cold. Why did God tell Jeremiah this? Because Jeremiah was a representative of God, and this was a righteous judgment from God upon a wicked people.

2. Now in Jeremiah 16:6 you may miss what the Lord is saying because we don't practice those things any longer. Let me share with you what Moses said in Deuteronomy 14:1-2, "**You are the children of the LORD your God; you shall not cut yourselves nor shave the front of your head for the dead. For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.**"

These were the practices of the heathens and God forbid His people from doing those things. And God is saying that they will not be able to continue their pagan practices because many will be destroyed and the rest taken into captivity. There will be no time for them to practice those things that God told them not to do. It is a rebuke of how far from God they had fallen and their refusal to get up, to return to the Lord.

In fact, things are going to be so chaotic they will not be able to comfort those who have lost loved ones; they won't be able to share in this meal. Their normal social life will be gone because of the judgment that has come upon them.

3. And for Jeremiah, his social life was not very good, he didn't have one. He was a prophet of God, he was to speak forth the Words of God and the people did not want to hear it and they isolated themselves from Jeremiah. He was forbidden to marry, he was forbidden to mourn, and he was forbidden to mingle you might say. And this was to be a sign that the days ahead are not going to be good, destruction was fast approaching.

I don't know if you have experienced this when people find out you're a Christian but I have. Sometimes I am introduced as a pastor and it is like I have the plague and people move away from me as fast as possible, they don't want to be around me. And hey, I showered! But that is not the reason, the light of God exposes their darkness and they don't like it so they flee. Jeremiah found that out and I am sure you have too!

VERSES 10-13

1. Think about this for a minute. God has warned His people that if they don't turn away from their sin and back to Him that judgment was coming. Prophet after prophet warned them and their words fell on deaf ears. No one wanted to listen.

So as Jeremiah speaks forth God's Words of judgment and now the people begin to see these things come to pass, they see the enemy coming closer and closer to them and they just can't understand why this is happening to them.

I am sure you have heard the word "denial" and not the River in Egypt! The truth is before them and they are refusing to see the truth, why all this is happening to them. Let me say this, when you are living in sin you are not going to acknowledge it because that makes you guilty before God, so you justify it and we are really good at doing that!

Let me share this story with you and you will see how we will use denial and all kinds of arguments so we don't condemn ourselves. We are told,

I was once conducting a rap session with high school teenagers. I told them that they could ask me any question on any subject, and I would try and answer it. Their questions were typical of ones I had received in similar session's scores of times before. As the session drew to a close, one girl toward the back, who had not said anything, raised her hand. I nodded, and she said, "The Bible says God loves everybody. Then it says that God sends people to hell. How can a loving God do that?"

I gave her my answer, and she came back to me with arguments. I answered her arguments, and she answered my answers. The conversation quickly degenerated into an argument. I did not convince her, nor did she convince me. After a few more questions I dismissed the session.

After the session I approached her and said, "I owe you an apology. I really should not have allowed our discussion to become so argumentative." Then I asked, "May I share something with you?" She said, "Yes."

So I took her through a basic presentation of the gospel. When I got to Romans 3:23 and suggested that all of us were sinners she began to cry. It was then that this high school senior admitted she had been having an affair with a married man. The one thing she needed was forgiveness. When I finished the presentation of the gospel, she trusted Christ.

The reason she did not believe in hell was because she was going there. In her heart she knew she had sinned. Her conscience condemned her, but rather than face the fact of her guilt, she simply denied any future judgment or future hell.

That is one of the reasons why they were so blinded to their sin, they denied they were sinning, they did not see what they were doing as a sin.

2. There is another reason that they did not see their sin and that was that they were used to it. Yes their fathers forsook the Lord but they themselves took it a step further because they were use to what their fathers were doing and each generation went just a little farther away from God!

Maybe you have heard of the illustration of the frog and the pot of water. If you place a frog in a boiling pot of water he will jump out. But, if you place him in a cool pot of water and gradually turn up the heat, he will remain in the pot. He will be comfortable, unaware of the danger until he is boiled to death. That, I believe, is what happened to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. They were gradually moving farther and farther away from God, oblivious to the danger, not seeing their sin, their rebellion against God. And they not only got accustomed to their sin, but they also denied it!

3. Look at our nation today and how far we have come. Do you think the people, let's say one-hundred years ago, would tolerate what is going on today? Imagine the blatant homosexuality, adulatory, pornography, murder, drug abuse, and-so-on. They would not have tolerated it. But slowly we are getting use to these things until they become a normal part of our lives. The big thing that some of the psychologists are pushing now is this. They say that having sex with children does them no harm and within the family they are encouraging people to do these kinds of things. We are outraged by that kind of thinking, now. But I wonder what people will say in just twenty-years?

Let me share these words because I think we are quick to condemn our nation and how depraved we have gotten but what are we doing about it. We are told,

For years we have watched as the vice of this nation continues to grow. What we once thought as unthinkable, we now view as acceptable. We began to see the face of our vice enough that it became viewed as inevitable. We then grew to identify with it, taking sympathy with the effect it has on our life each day. Then the day came we accepted our vice, taking its' cause and use as our very own.

What is the vice of this nation I speak of? Sin! We have watched for years as sin has become a common part of our society and culture. We have watched as this nation has endured, pity, and now embraces sin. We have even seen our nation go one step further, we now openly encourage it.

Many have watched in horror as this has happened in front of our eyes. The Church has sat in shock as God's Word has been replaced in our society by man's desires. But as we have watched, we have seen the Church's vice also take form. What is this vice of the Church I speak of? Silence! Nothingness is our greatest vice.

“When I say to the wicked, ‘You will surely die,’ and you do not warn him or speak out to warn the wicked from his wicked way that he may live, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.” , Ezekiel 3:18. The Church today has forgotten the words that the prophet Ezekiel spoke. We have found it easier to sit in silence than to speak from our convictions. We refuse to realize that God sees our silence as great an offense as the act committed by the wicked man himself.

Few today know the name of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. During the early 1930's, Bonhoeffer served as a pastor and lecturer in Germany. As Hitler came to power in early 1933, Bonhoeffer began to see the dangers that would come to the nation of Germany, and to its' people. Many, professing to be Christians in Germany, sat quietly as the Nazi's put forth teaching that went against the Word of God, and said nothing as they began to persecute God's Chosen People.

When most lost their voice, Bonhoeffer gained his. Along with a group of fellow pastors and theologians, Bonhoeffer started the Confessing Church, a movement to counter the false teaching of Nazism.

During this time, Bonhoeffer served as a teacher at an underground seminary, because he was banned to speak publicly. Soon the underground seminary was discovered and destroyed, and many within the Confessing Church movement became silent, no longer willing to speak out against the growing threat of the Nazis. It was at this time that Bonhoeffer chose to speak louder.

He became a double agent. He signed up with the German Secret Service, travelling to church conferences throughout Europe, supposedly collecting information for the Nazi government. But instead he was helping Jews escape the horrors that the Nazis had brought their way. On an afternoon in April, 1943, Bonhoeffer was discovered, and taken to Tegel prison.

Bonhoeffer served two years in prison. He was eventually transferred to Buchenwald, and then to the extermination camp at Flossenburg. On April 9, 1945, one month before Germany surrendered to the Allied forces, Bonhoeffer was hung as a traitor to Germany.

Years later, a camp doctor who had been present at Bonhoeffer's hanging, described the events he saw that day. "Through the half-open door in one room of the huts, I saw Pastor Bonhoeffer, before taking off his prison garb, kneeling on the floor praying fervently to his God.

I was most deeply moved by the way this lovable man prayed, so devout and so certain that God heard his prayer. At the place of execution, he again said a prayer and then climbed the steps to the gallows, brave and composed. His death ensued in a few seconds. In the almost 50 years that I have worked as a doctor, I have hardly ever seen a man die so entirely submissive to the will of God.” Even at the moment of his death, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was not silent, he brought glory to God.

Bonhoeffer’s words should ring true with us today. “Action springs not from thought, but from a readiness for responsibility.” The Church needs to have those words etched into our minds. We see far too many churches and Christians doing nothing. They stand idle, nothing but spectators, as the events of this nation unfold around us. If good prevails, they cheer, joining in the celebration, having done nothing to aid in the victory. If evil prevails, they are the first to complain in the quiet of their homes, although their own inaction brought about the defeat. They choose to ignore the words of Edmund Burke, “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.” When good men do nothing, then nothing good gets done.

Before it is too late, it is time the church once again found its’ voice. We must no longer just shake our head in disgust from the pews at the direction this nation is moving. We must be willing to take a stand, to put action into the Word that God has given us. We must clear our throats, and begin to speak clearly God’s Word to this nation.

Simon & Garfunkel once sang, “Fools,” said I, ‘You do not know. Silence like a cancer grows. Hear my words that I might teach you. Take my arms that I might reach you.’ But my words like silent raindrops fell. And echoed in the wells of silence.” Our silence has become our cancer. But we have a choice, and must ask ourselves this question. Will we now stand up and fight this cancer with every fiber of our being, or will we sit quietly and watch as this cancer consumes us? We need to know going in, this will not be an easy fight. The odds are greatly stacking against us each day. Each day we are silent the enemy grows stronger. And this could be a fight that will cost us all dearly, with the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer echoing in our minds. But this nation, and God’s Word is worth fighting for. I, for one, am ready to fight! I will not go quietly!

- <http://www.gotchristianity.com/2014/04/21/sound-silence-sin-nothingness/>

4. As you look at Jeremiah 16:11-13 God answers their question of why this judgment was coming upon them. It is really very simple, it was not very complicated, they just refused to listen.

You see, the reason for their judgment was their idolatry, their turning away from God. In fact they continued to spiral farther and farther away from God, refusing to listen to the Lord and they trusted in their own wicked hearts. They were serving other god’s, idols, and God was going to give them the desire of their hearts. Babylon became the center of occult practices and as they were taken away captive they could serve these false god’s there in Babylon. They turned from the true and living God and the blessings He had for them. A pretty dark picture of a people going into captivity and keep in mind that as they turned from God they also sunk into moral depravity. Any nation that turns from God will sink down into moral depravity!

VERSES 14-15

1. You have to love the mercy of God. We see here, right in the middle of all this judgment, a blackness that was so deep; we see the light of God shining through. Right in the midst of all this judgment is a hope for the future. Yes they were going into captivity but they were also going to return home once again. God tempers His judgment with grace and with mercy, with hope! He was teaching His people a lesson which they did learn; they no longer went into idolatry.

Remember what the Jeremiah wrote 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 that, each day is a new day with the Lord.

VERSE 16

1. But now back to the reality of what was coming. God is telling Jeremiah that the Babylonians will come in like fishermen and catch the people like fish. They will come as hunters and hunt down the people in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. It will not be pretty but captivity never is. That is why Jesus calls us to come to Him because, **“Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”** John 8:36.

VERSE 17

1. For whatever reason they thought all that they did was in secret but it is never in secret. Nothing they did and nothing we do is hidden from God. He see’s everything we do and even the thoughts of our heart. Hebrews 4:13 says, **“And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”**

VERSE 18

1. The Lord said that He is going to repay them double for their sin because they knew better and yet they refused to obey the Lord. The word “**defiled**” is sometimes used to refer to a combined ethical, physical, and spiritual uncleanness. God’s land or inheritance had been profaned by numerous cultic objects, which Jeremiah scathingly refers to as the carcasses of their detestable and abominable idols.

When Dr. Shiloh was doing some excavation in Jerusalem he dug down to the layer of history that represented the time of the Babylonian captivity. Besides finding this ash layer he also discovered hundreds of idols that were placed in their homes. We see here the evidence for God’s judgment, their idolatry, just as the Word of God said.

VERSES 19-21

1. The Jews had developed the idea that the Gentiles were created for only one purpose, to fuel the fires of Hell. And granted the Gentiles for the most part were very wicked. But some did get saved. In fact, Ruth, a Moabite, was the great, great grandmother of King David! She is in the lineage of Christ! And here again in Jeremiah we see Him speak of a day when the Gentiles will come to know the Lord on a large scale. We are living in those days as the Word of God is spreading throughout the world. And Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus will enter into the Kingdom Age with Him.

2. Like back then people refuse to acknowledge their sin and the coming judgment of God upon a Christ rejecting world! And tragically, many are not prepared to meet their Maker, to have an encounter with God and they will spend eternity apart from Him. Today is the day of salvation. There are none who are good, no not one! Thus, come to Jesus and receive the forgiveness of your sins, let the blood of Christ cleanse you from all unrighteousness. The judgment of God is coming whether you believe it or not!