

Warning to an Apostate Nation

Jeremiah

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Let's have a word of prayers as we begin our study tonight. Thank you Father for the privilege of praise just singing through that song simply and wonderfully stating that we adore You and we adore the Son and the Spirit. To have the great privilege of offering your praise and knowing that it's accepted because we have accepted Jesus Christ, is indeed a cause for joy. As we come to the word now Lord, we pray too that we would receive your word as well as You have received us. That we sinners who have been received by You a Holy God would be willing to receive Your holy word to us. Open our hearts and our minds to understand and our wills to respond. In Christ's name. Amen

We're looking tonight at the book of Jeremiah. At this point, you can open your Bible to Jeremiah the 1st Chapter and just settle for a minute and we'll be examining various portions of Scripture in a few seconds. We live in a day when God is completely ignored. Men plunge head-long into vice, busy giving full expression to their reprobate minds. In our own country justice is breaking down. Standards are being perverted. God has been replaced by money, sex, and human ego. It seems to me that man has gone beyond the bounds that God set and stands on the edge of an eternal night. Our nation as, for the most part, forgotten God. I would have to say that worse than that, they pretty much mock God.

As the Scripture says, we could say of us there is no fear of God in them. Evil abounds in our society and sadly has even filtered its way into the church. I really believe as I shared with you in our last study together that we've gone too far. Too far in the church and too far in our nation, and I think we face a divine judgment in these days. The prophet Jeremiah faced the very same kind of time. He faced the nation on the brink of a disaster. And this was not just any nation, but the nation of Israel specially loved, specially chosen, specially made the objective of God's plans and purposes in reaching the world, and yet this nation had rejected God. And because they had rejected God, God was going to come against them in a very severe judgment. And Jeremiah was the prophet of doom.

Jeremiah is the one who brings to them the word of God just before the judgment comes to pass. It could be summed up perhaps in Jeremiah Chapter 5, verses 22-23. This is what it says. "Fear ye not me saith the Lord. Will ye not tremble at my presence who have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree that it cannot pass it and though its waves toss themselves yet can they not prevail. Though they roar, yet can they not pass over it. But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart. They are revolted and gone."

Now that it is very graphic language. It is true of Judah and I offer you the thought that it is also true of America. What is Jeremiah really saying? Well, the first thing that comes to mind as you look at the verse is this, he is saying does not my majesty cause you to fear me. The first statement of verse 22? Are you not in awe of a God who can bound the sea with a strip of sand? And no matter how fierce the sea becomes and no matter how pounds and beats upon the shore, it knows its limits and

it is restrained.

The almighty power of Jehovah God is so clearly manifest in the works of His creation, Paul said, that man is without excuse if he doesn't see God in creation. Now that is essentially what Jeremiah is saying. Your mind shall be stirred to realize the creative power, the providential majesty of God and should melt your will into worship and obedience when you know that God controls the elements. The pride of the waves is stayed by the hand of God.

Spurgensaid, "I can scarcely conceive a heart so callous that it feels no awe or a human mind so dull and destitute of understanding as fairly to view the tokens of God's omnipotent power and then turn aside without some sense of the fitness of obedience." Spurgen is saying I can't conceive of someone who can see God's power in the world and then turn his back on that God. You must be in awe of a God who controls the sea. Is all this no lesson for men? How can we sin against the greatness of such a God and yet Jeremiah says "still my people are a revolting and a rebellious people." Have they forgotten that the same God that stops the roaring of the sea and confines it to its limits is the same God who have stopped the roaring of a sinful man and confined that man within a certain tolerance.

The sea knows its bounds. It's one up on man. This is the great lesson. Man shakes his puny fist in the face of Almighty God and forgets that it is God who controls everything. Poor, puny man, the little creature I could crush like a moth, says God, will not be obedient to me. My people are a revolting and a rebellious people. The go astray. And I think there's a most insightful thought here. He says that "I have placed the sand for the bound of the sea." How amazing it is sand is anything but formidable. Sand can be picked up and it drips through your fingers.

You can pick up a handful of it and throw it at somebody and its harmless. Sand can be moved around. Sand is not particularly strong, and yet with one simple little band of sand God controls the raging, roaring of the mighty oceans of the earth. God in affect is saying this, something stronger than sand I have given my people. I have given my people Israel my promises, my word, my covenant, my love, my forgiveness, but all of the strength of all of my love and all of my covenants and all of my promises have not been able to restrain their roaring and they are rebellious and have overstepped their bounds.

Man, you see, is not like the sea. The sea knows its limits, man doesn't. And man oversteps the bounds. Man breaks beyond the categories that God has given. Even Adam man innocent, man without sin overstepped his bounds. How far worse is sinful man? And so this is the thrust of what Jeremiah is saying throughout his great prophecy. My people are a revolting and a rebellious people and they have not considered mighty God. They have gone too far.

Now Jeremiah's time was the time of the holocaust. Jeremiah was 80 to 100 years later than Isaiah. Everything that Isaiah said was going to happen did happen at the end of Jeremiah's time. Isaiah, you remember, had said that judgment was coming and Jeremiah says it's here. Jeremiah says the Babylonians are going to arrive and the Babylonians are going to slaughter you. And the Babylonians are going to take you into captivity and that is exactly what happened. Jeremiah stood on the edge of the holocaust. Jeremiah was the prophet of the end of the glory days of Israel.

The late Dr. Morehead said it was Jeremiah lot to prophecy at time when all things in Judah were

rushing down to the final and mournful catastrophe. When political confusion was at its height, when the worst passions swayed the people's hearts and the most fatal counsels prevailed to see his own people whom he loved with the tenderness of a woman plunge over the presuppose into the wide weltering ruin, that was Jeremiah's lot.

Jeremiah was the prophet of Judah's midnight hour. Isaiah prophesied at 11 o'clock and Jeremiah prophesied at midnight. Jeremiah preached for 42 years, 42 years. During the reign of five kings Jeremiah preached. The first of those kings was a man named Josiah. And if you've read the Old Testament you know that Josiah was a good king. And near the end of the reign of Josiah there was a period of reformation in Judah. A period of great revival, if you will. And Josiah, you know, went to the high places where all the idols had been erected, to the groves where the people had worshipped the false gods of the pagans around them. And Josiah led a great reformation and he tore down the high places and he demolished the idols and he removed idolatry from the land of Judah. He was a great reformer.

But before all of this happened, the prophet Huldah said this, "Josiah, you will lead a reformation with no permanent results. All of your efforts will not last beyond your lifetime. And the reason is this, the people will follow you because they are attached to you as a person, not because they are truly attached to God. And so the revival in Judah was a revival based upon Josiah, not on God. Josiah was a charismatic celebrity. He was an attractive human being and the people followed Josiah through a reform and the moment Josiah died the reform ended.

Oh how that speaks to our time. I'm afraid that what looks like a revival and a reformation in our country is nothing but a preoccupation with certain celebrities. I wonder to myself whether all that's being said in the name of Christianity isn't an attachment to certain personalities. Marty Brewer gave me a tape this last week from Gordon McDonald who pastors a Grace Fellowship back in Massachusetts. And he was saying this similar thing. He was saying if you don't think this is so, mark down who speaks at the great conferences and conventions in America when Christians gather together, beauty queens, famous athletes, rich people, presidents of big businesses, movie stars, famous musicians.

We are celebrity conscious. Much of our evangelism is based upon some celebrity getting in front of a group and saying this is what happened to me. Wouldn't you like it to happen to you? Or some speaker who has charisma about him who can move people to follow himself. And I fear that what we're seeing today intending to call revival is nothing more than a preoccupation with certain famous people. I questioned whether it has any lasting value at all.

Josiah was followed by a man Jehoahaz. Jehoahaz was only on the throne for three months and he was bad. He was followed by Jehoiakim. And Jehoiakim, you'll be sad to know, put back all the idolatry that Josiah tore down. Put it all back. He was an appalling man. He was an evil man. And he brought the people back to every form of corruption and idolatry that Josiah had eliminated just three months before.

Jehoiakim was followed by Jehoiakin who also only ruled for three months and he was bad and then the fifth of the kings in Jeremiah's life was a man named Zedekiah. He was a vacillating, cowardly weakling who saw the nation swiftly sliding down the slide of depravity into ruin and extinction and couldn't do anything about it because of the evil of his own life. Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiakin, and Zedekiah, five kings. A phony revival and four bad kings and then came the

holocaust.

And Israel was slaughtered and led into the Babylonian captivity where the Bible says they hung their harps on the willows because they had no more song to sing. The glory days were gone. Their land was decimated. For 42 years Jeremiah preached. Listen to this, for 42 years it got worse. Jeremiah preached during the time of Josiah because Jeremiah knew what Huldah knew. That it wasn't real revival. That it wasn't a real reformation. It was fassad. And he knew what was coming. He knew the inevitability of the judgment.

And he wasn't fooled by what appeared on the surface to be a revival. As I look at our own country today, I have to feel a little bit like a Jeremiah. I see a lot of activity around the concept of Christianity, but I question its validity. I'm not sure its really centered on God. I'm afraid its centered more on personalities. I believe we stand near a holocaust in our own country, and I believe this quasi reformation will have little lasting results.

We'll look at the church. If this were a true revival, there would be such a running abounding over-running attitude of righteousness that we would all be caught up in it, because true revival always results in righteous living, always. I don't necessarily see that as I look at the church. I look at the church, I see divorce, I see the break up of homes. I see no commitment to care for the children. I see an encroaching materialism. I see gluttony. I see the desire for fame. I see a success madness. All of these factors I see in the church belie the fact that there's a genuineness to the revival.

I feel we're a doomed society hell bound, godless, on the edge of night. Now you say well, I'm a Christian, John, and so are you. Where do we fit in? Are we to take part in this world? Are we to buy the world's fair, laugh at the world's jokes? Sit, smile at its entertainment? That's what we've been doing in the church. What did Jeremiah do? How did he get along in a dying nation? How did he confront an apostate people? Well, let's find out.

And I want to talk to you tonight out of Jeremiah on the responsibility of the godly in an ungodly day. The responsibility of the godly in an ungodly day. How to live on the edge of the holocaust. How to live in a doomed society. Three things to recognize, all right? Number one, a divine mandate, a divine mandate. What is to be our position in this society, a godless, humanistic, atheistic, materialistic, indulgent society. What is it to be in a society where there is religious tokenism and even a bone now and then thrown at Jesus Christ? How are we to live in that society? Are we to get engulfed in it? Are we to buy what its selling? If not, how are we to view ourselves.

Number one, we are to know we have a divine mandate. And this is the first reality facing Jeremiah in his dying nation. Chapter 1, Jeremiah Chapter 1. Jeremiah had to face this fact people, and I want you to get this that he was called out of that society. That he had a divine mandate that lifted him out of that society. He was to preach judgment. That was his calling. I think we've been way, way too soft on this. We want to receive everybody. We want to water down our evangelism so people can get in who don't even believe the right thing. We want to accept anybody who lets out the word Jesus from between their lips.

We don't want to condemn anybody. We want to make sure we soft soap and cajole and pamper everybody so nobody gets offended because in the name of love we might lose them. Now nobody loves more than God and nobody loves more than Jesus and nobody in the Old Testament that I can

find loved more Jeremiah. At least nobody cried more, but nobody preached a stronger message of judgment either.

You see, he had to realize that he had to preach to the issue of the day. That he couldn't bypass it. In the name of love or anything else. He had to confront that evil society where it needed confrontation. People often say to me, you know, I have this so and so person and I know they're doing this, but I just feel that I better not say anything because they might get offended. Whoever sold us that hunk of bologna? Where did we ever get that?

Not from Jeremiah. Three features can be seen in Chapter 1, verses 4-10 that lead us to comprehend his divine mandate. Three features to tell us he was set apart for God's service. First, he was prepared by God, verse 4. "Then the word of the Lord came unto me saying, before I form thee in the womb, I knew thee. And before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." Now stop there.

Now that's a pretty hefty bit of information for Jeremiah to handle. Before you were born I knew you. Before you were born I sanctified you. Before you born I ordained you a prophet of the nations. Jeremiah, your life has one intention. You are to be set apart from these people to speak to these people. And by the way Jeremiah gives messages not only to Judah, but to all of the nations surrounding as well.

He as a prophet to the nations prepared by God before he was ever born. First of all, before I formed thee means before he was conceived God knew him. That's predestination. That's for ordination. God knew him, set His love on him, called him, before he was conceived. Before he ever came out of the womb, he was ordained as a prophet.

Now listen, an artist who wants to make a beautiful piece of sculpture finds a suitable piece of marble to shape. God doesn't do it that way. God creates the marble to start with. God doesn't pick up the pieces of what you are and make you into what He wants you to be. He starts from before you were ever born, to set in order what He has for your life.

God gives the biography of Jeremiah in eleven short Hebrew words when he says "before you were conceived I knew you. Before you came out, were born, I sanctified you and ordained you a prophet to the nations." There is a life history that begins in the timelessness of eternity past as God begins to set things in motion for the creation of this prophet. And it ultimately ends when this age is over and Bibles are no more and the prophet is silenced.

What a man, a man for a crisis. When we face a crisis, we think of a program when God faces a crisis, He immediately thinks of a baby. Because God uses people, people ordained by His own sovereign decree. Now Jeremiah had to know at the very beginning that he was especially appointed by God to be separated from the system to be a voice for God. And I want to tell you why this is important. Dean Millman said this, "Whoever does not have a sense of being predestined by God to service will never work nor ever has worked any revolution for God." I agree with that.

"Further," he says, "he who is destined for such a great work, must have a full conviction that God is acting directly, immediately, consciously, and therefore with irresistible power upon him and through him. He who is not predestined, who does not declare, who does not believe himself predestined as

the author of a great movement for God, he in whom God has not manifestly sensibly avowedly working out his pre-established designs will never be saint or reformer."

That's a great statement. Unless you have a sense of a divine call before you were ever born, you will never be committed to the degree it takes to make a difference in your world. If you think you're some Johnny Come Lately or some tack on or some add or some final move by God who couldn't get it done another way, you've missed the whole point of your life. The fact is, for whatever giftedness God has prepared you, for whatever task He has called you to do he predestined that before you were ever conceived. Therefore, that is why you exist.

With that in mind, it ought to give you some new thrust in the ministry you have. A ministry for which you were made. And so God wants Jeremiah to know that first of all he was prepared by God and beloved that's true of us. We stand in the midst of a society on the edge of the holocaust. Do we really understand that God has prepared us as he did Esther for just such a time as this? Do you really believe that God has created you and redeemed you and set you here in this place to pull you apart from the world to accomplish a ministry for him? Or have you found yourself engulfed in the system?

If we begin to see our calling, it's going to make a difference. And it's true of all Christians. In Ephesians Chapter 1 listen to what it says in verse 4. "He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him. In love having predestinated us." And for what reason, that we might be able to exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think. In order that we might walk worthy of the vocation to which we were called.

You see, God set this thing in motion long before now. Before you were ever born, God designed you to be a part of His family, a part of His body and He designed you to stand up against the evil age in which you'd live and stand up for Jesus Christ. Sadly, most people in the church today call themselves Christians and perhaps are, are so busy with creature comforts, so busy fitting in to the current fashion of the world making sure they dress right and they drive the right car, have the right stuff in the house and have the right job and climb the social ladder and have the right associations and all this. So busy doing that, that we get lost in the system and we have no sense of a predestined call of God to come out of that system and stand as a rebuke.

As Paul said to the Philippians, coming apart as lights and holding forth the word of life. Jeremiah's whole nation, the whole Judah should have been a witness. The whole should have been a witness to all the other nations, but they had all failed so God had to pick up this Jeremiah who almost was alone in what he did. But I believe God has called us all to that kind of separation. You know, in Chapter 2, verse 18, there's a most interesting verse in Jeremiah's prophecy. He says this, "And now what hath thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? Or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river."

Jeremiah is saying to the people this, what are you doing messing around in a muddy river in Egypt. What are you doing fooling around with the water of Assyria? Whatever happened to the cool streams of Lebanon? What are you doing conducting your life in the way of the pagans. Do you see? What are you doing drinking the water of the world? What are you doing wallowing in the muddy river of the world?

Don't you realize God has called you out of this? This whole nation had been chosen by God, Jehovah, to take the message of truth to the nations to be a separated people, but they had abandoned and violated their calling. They had broken down the walls that separated them. They wanted more than anything free course with the pagans. They desired the gods of Egypt and the gods of Assyria. They built altars in the high places. They got involved in the evil sexual immoral orgies of those pagan gods. They engaged in the filthy abominations of the Assyrians and the Egyptians and when they were oft reproved by God the Bible says they hardened their necks against God and Jeremiah says what are you doing in that kind of a lifestyle. When God has called you from before you were born to be His witness nation.

They failed to be separated. So God reminds Jeremiah to be separated. And I do believe God has called us all out. Oh I believe certain of us are appointed to preach, but all of us are called to speak to this nation. Some of us have voices louder than others. Not necessarily more effective. The church has failed in general and I believe its churches like ours that God is raising up and we have to be faithful. We're kind of the last bastion before the fall. To realize we've been prepared by God with a divine mandate.

Secondly, not only the preparation of God, but the provision of God, verse 6. "Then said I, Ah, Lord God behold I cannot speak for I am child." He says wait a minute. You've got the wrong guy. I'm a child. What do you mean? I mean, I don't have the credentials. I don't have the experience. By the way, the word I cannot speak, the word cannot there has reference to knowing something by experience. Jeremiah is saying I can't do this, I don't have any experience. I'm not qualified.

He cries, "Ah, Lord God," it sounds like Isaiah in Chapter 6 who said, "woe is me," you've got the wrong guy. He shudders at the very thought of such a task because he sees himself as inadequate. That's just the kind of people God uses you know. It's the kind of people who line up and say here I am God wouldn't you like to use me that He's not interested in.

If you feel fearful, if you feel inadequate you'll be in the prophetic succession at least in that point. Jeremiah was young. Most estimates are that he was 30 years of age. It's a good time to start. Jesus thought it was a good time to start, but he thought himself a child. I'm just a child. I have no experience. But look at the response in verse 7. "But the Lord said unto say not I am a child for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces for I am with thee to deliver thee saith the Lord."

He says Jeremiah, you don't worry about that. I've not only prepared you from the womb, but I've made provision for you when you do the job. I'm going to give you the words to say and you can open your mouth and I'll speak through you and you need not have any fear. Don't worry about your voice. Don't worry about your looks. Don't worry about your wardrobe. Don't worry about your experience. Don't worry about your ability. Don't worry about your personality. You just open your mouth and let me use you.

It's like Paul, isn't it, in 1 Corinthians who says "I didn't come to you in human wisdom. I didn't come to you in eloquence of speech. I didn't come saying great things that you would think I was some great one. I came humbly and simply preaching nothing but Christ and Him crucified." Let God be your wisdom Jeremiah. It's the same promise Jesus gave to the apostles when He was leaving. They were afraid.

He said to them several times, stop being troubled in your heart. Why? They were afraid. And so He says to them, don't worry when I go away the spirit of truth will come and He'll lead you into all truth, He'll bring all things into your remembrance and whatever I tell Him, He'll tell you. You'll be all right. That's what He's telling Jeremiah. I'm Almighty God and I'm going to provide for you.

You know, the implication of verse 8 is that it's going to be tough for Jeremiah. Don't be afraid of their faces. They're going to make ugly faces at you. For I will deliver you, that means they're going to take you and do things with you. And by the way, Chapters 30, 31, 32, 33 were written by Jeremiah while he was in prison, prison.

But you know what, he had a servant's heart and he was willing to obey. Forty-two years he preached and the nation got worse and worse and worse and worse until finally it went into captivity. Forty-two years nobody really responded to Jeremiah. Forty-two years he poured out his heart with weeping and nobody really responded at all. But the key to thing was that Jeremiah was a servant. He wasn't concerned with being successful. He was concerned with being a servant. And there's a big difference.

We have a lot people, even in Christianity today, who want to be successful, but not so many who want to be a servant. Now there are lots of people standing in line for the easy places, but there's no one around for the hard places, because people would rather be successful than servants. And he was a servant. And God said I'll make provision for you.

Third thing, you have a divine mandate, which involves preparation by God, provision by God, and thirdly power from God, verse 9. "Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth and the Lord said unto me behold I have put my words in thy mouth. See I have this day," get this now, "set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms to root out, to pull down, to destroy, to throw down, to build, and to plant."

I mean, that is absolutely unbelievable. He's got on little common guy from a little no where place and He says you are my man and you will speak to all the nations and you will lift them up and tear them down. You don't have to be the king to have power. You don't have to be the President to have power. You don't have to be the governor or the mayor or a senator or a congressman or any assemblyman to have power. The greatest power facing a nation at any time is in the preachers of that country. I believe that. And of course, when preachers abandon the message, then there's a serious, serious downfall.

Jeremiah was unskilled in oratory and so God touched his mouth and said Jeremiah I'm going to take care of that part. He put in him the living burning shattering, building mighty power of the word of God so that that simple, humble man was literally set over. I have this, they set thee over. The word means to supervise. Listen Jeremiah became the supervisor of the world. When he spoke things happened. He was able to root out and pull down and destroy. He was able to build and plant. This is power like no politician ever has.

If you're trying to decide whether to be a preacher or a politician, there's no comparison in the power provided God's given you the call. Kings, nations, empires, boast their power, but it is the messenger of God who rules them all. The 30 year old obscure man from an obscure town in an obscure country

was told I have set you over all the nations and kingdoms of the earth. Listen people, do you realize what it is to have the power of God in your life? Do you realize what it is to have been prepared by God before you were born? To have been provided by God with the word to speak and empowered by God to take your place over the nations and kingdoms of this world.

With that kind of a resource and a divine mandate, it is behooving to us to stand boldly in the face of a dying nation and to speak the message that our preparation, our provision and our power demands of us. People say to me sometimes, well, you certainly do speak authoritatively. You certainly speak boldly. I don't know any other way to speak. And if you ask me if I like a brown shirt or a blue shirt, I don't care. Or if you ask me if I prefer this particular meal or that particular meal, I might not care. But you ask me what is true about the word of God and I will speak boldly.

Those are issues to which we can speak. And so people, I think we have to realize this, from before you were born God set you apart, prepared you. In the indwelling Holy Spirit you have the provision and the power for a ministry. We are living at the edge of a holocaust. The glory days of America are in the past. Somebody told me not long ago they were standing and singing hymns really to America. God Bless America and so forth and literally choked up and had a hard time saying those words because those things have ceased to be true.

If God blessed America, then God has changed His formula for blessing, because America's not interested in God. We have a divine mandate to speak the truth. Secondly, Jeremiah not only had a divine mandate, but a direct message, a direct message. He spoke directly to the issues of his day. He went right to the core of the matter. Chapter 14, verse 7, "Oh Lord though our iniquities testify against us, do it for thy name's sake. For our backslidings are many. We have sinned against thee."

Jeremiah preached on sin. I heard a preacher say "one thing you could never do is preach on sin that turns people off. I never preach on sin. You have to make people feel good." You know when I sit and listen to somebody say that, it does a lot of strange things to me. All I ever think about is God's word that is an exact opposition to that. Jeremiah spoke to the sins of his day and we've seen what happens when you do that. You get people marching in the patio with their little signs like we had a few months ago or from news reel cameras or problems in the newspaper. We expect that.

In fact, I don't know if you remember but when we did that our attendance went up a thousand in two weeks and right now we have a study committee trying to figure out some more things that we can do. We're not afraid to confront the society in which we live. That's the mandate we have from God. Jeremiah said in Chapter 17, verse 9, "Here is the real issue, the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked."

In other words, you are vile, sinful people and you have wicked hearts. That's what needs to be said. That's the message. And he zeroed in on it. Boy I mean, he went right for the jugular. Let me show you some of the sins he preached against. Chapter 3, verse 9, false religion is the first one. "It came to pass through the likeness of her harlotry that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and with trees." Oh how vivid. How vivid.

He says, you've committed your adultery with stones and trees. What does he mean? Up in the groves to the idols you've committed your adulteries. And those idols were not only spiritual adultery, but they had physical adultery attached to their worship, your idolatrist.

Chapter 3, verse 10, "And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart." Chapter 5, verse 7, "How shall I pardon thee for this thy children have forsaken me sworn by them that are no gods. When I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses." God says, I was their God. I was their loving husband and I gave them everything and they turned to other gods and committed spiritual adultery, false religion.

Chapter 9, verse 13 and 14 same thing. "And the Lord said because they have forsaken my law which I set before them and have not obeyed my voice neither walked in it, but have walked after the imagination of their own heart and after Baalim," again, false religion. Chapter 11, verse 10, "They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers." They've gone back before Josiah's time who refused to hear my words. They went after other gods to serve them. He says, "They have broken my covenant."

Chapter 19, verse 4, and these are just samples. There are many, many others. "Because they have forsaken me and have desecrated this place and burned incense in it unto other gods whom neither they nor their fathers have none, nor the kinds of Judah and have filled this place with the blood of innocence." They literally, apparently got into the slaughter of babies, false religion.

They substituted a phony brand of religion for the true and they played spiritual harlots. But you know what is sickening beyond everything is in Chapter 7 it tells us...you don't need to look it up. It just says this, "That you kept coming to the temple. You kept coming to worship me all the time. You come and stand before me in this house. And I say why are you delivered to all these abominations. What are you doing here? You've got your false religion and then you come over here to this house. This house, which is called by my name, has become a den of robbers in your eyes."

False religion, play the harlot. Chapter 2 sums it up most beautifully, verse 12. "Be appalled oh ye heavens at this. Be horribly afraid. Be very desolate saith the Lord." He's calling on the sky to fold up really. Why? "For my people have committed two evils. They have forsaken me." That's the first evil. That's bad enough. "Because I am the fountain of living waters." The eternal fountain head of life is God the Lord who made His Son to bring the living water to reach and quench the thirsty heart of the soul. But they have forsaken that and look what they've done secondly. They have hued out cisterns. Broken cisterns that can hold no water. They rejected the true source of life. The hued out man made systems of religion that were broken and they leaked out and they were resourceless.

First they denied God and then they invented false religion. It's a great verse. "You have forsaken me the fountain of living waters and hued out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." Any system of religion invented by man is a cistern made by man a broken cistern that holds no waters and is in a front to the God who was the fountain of all living water. We have it in our day. The cults and the isms and schisms and spasms and yogis and gurus and everything else. And we've got the liberals and we've got the people who want to claim to be Christians and they're involved in systems of false Christianity, liberalism, cult, self-worship, atheism, humanism.

We have a generation filled with broken cisterns. There's religion all over every place. And everybody's afraid to speak against it. Somebody will come up to me if I mention Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons and so oh you know you said something on that I had a friend and they're in

that and I just wish you wouldn't say that. Listen, I hope you do have a friend that that's in that and I hope your friend heard me say that. How can we help these people?

Recently, I was preaching on the radio in Boston and I was talking about the fact that the Bible shows us the truth about Mary and we're not to worship Mary and I got into some of these things and, of course, Boston is a very Catholic city and the radio station Go Bombarded with phone calls from priests and nuns and people were saying wait a minute, who is this guy? Where is he coming off talking about this? And all of this and so they called out here and they said oh you know look what's happened. You're going to have to run a disclaimer on the air and make a special tape and we'll stick it on the end. And I said well, I don't know what I'm going to say on that tape, because I just said exactly what I believe the Bible teaches. And if somebody's worshipping Mary, they're violating Scripture. And I hope all the people in Boston heard that. And it's not that I'm angry with the people in Boston. God loves those people, but they must know where truth is. Jeremiah faced a day of false religion.

Secondly, he faced the day of corrupt leadership. Chapter 5, the people didn't even trust the leaders. They said in verse 13 of Chapter 5, the prophets are windbags. That preacher he's a windbag. I've heard that said of me. I'm in good company. Prophets were windbags too. Verse 30, Chapter 5, "An appalling and a horrible thing is committed in the land. The prophets prophesied falsely and the priests bear rule by their means and my people love to have it so."

In other words, the prophets are phonies and the priests can be bribed and that's the way the people love it. There are false leaders. They never speak the truth and they take bribes, sound familiar? Look a long time in our society to find somebody who really tells you the unmitigated, unadulterated, open complete truth. I mean if people who lead in this country would just for one time say what is true it would sure straighten out a lot of things. People take bribes and they tell lies. And even the prophets that people said are nothing but windbags, preaching is a whole lot of platitudes, positive thinking, possibility thinking, make me feel good, watered down sermon, that's for Christian, that's and on and on and on.

People speak in their own ideas. The delusion is complete. The prophets have no credibility. That's right. You know, I was talking to Allister about this. In Scotland it's interesting how the clergy have a certain dignity and everybody respects the clergy. It's kind of interesting. You go into a church and they just honor the office and they revere you for what you do and in America, you know, you go into a church and make two mistakes and you're gone. It's a whole different ballgame. You know, you're either successful Charlie or you're gone. We'll trade you in for another model. We'll get somebody who can cut it.

There's no sense of respect for the office because the office has been so polluted by phonies, you see. And everybody becomes suspect. The leadership in the spiritual end and the leadership in the political end of Jeremiah's time was all corrupted. Not unlike our time.

Thirdly, there was a perversion of marriage. Chapter 3 begins with a verse that talks about divorce. There was no place in the whole land that wasn't touched by sexual vice. The land was totally polluted because people were messing up their marriages and playing the harlot. There was a...just a total dissolution of families.

Fourthly, if you look at Chapter 3, verse 24, there was general wickedness. It talks about shame, devouring the labor. Verse 25, "We lie down in our shame." They were literally like pigs wallowing in shame. In Chapter 5, the first two verses talk about lying and deceit. It says see if you can find a man that executes justice. See if you can find anybody that give you real justice. Find somebody who doesn't swear falsely. Everybody lies, everybody's unfair.

In Chapter 11 it talks about unfaithfulness, verse 8 to 10, people don't keep their promise. They abandon their vows. They break their word. Now what do have people? Listen, you have unfaithfulness, wickedness, fouled up families, spiritual adultery, physical harlotry, sexual evil, rotten leadership, corrupted priests and prophets. You have this wholesale thing going on in Jeremiah's land. It's just the same as we faced today.

So Jeremiah was told by God to give him an illustration of what God thought about this and I want you to see it's one of the most shocking things in the whole book, Chapter 13. Believe me, you'll be shocked. "Thus says the Lord unto me," 13:1, and I'm going to tell you how to interpret this as we go. "Go and purchase a linen," now your Bible maybe say girdle or belt. What it was, was a pair of shorts, under shorts. Basically, that's the reference the Hebrew is making. Now you go Jeremiah, now by the way, Jeremiah did a lot of things that were visible signs and symbols. The Lord told him to go buy a new pair of shorts "and put them on your loins and put it not in water."

In other words, don't ever wash them. Now you've heard of wash and wear shorts, this is wear but don't wash shorts. He was told not to wash them. Now you say well what in the world is this. Verse 11 explains it, "For the linen shorts clingeth to the loins of a man," his waist, "so have caused to cling unto me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah saith the Lord." The closest thing that a man has to his body is the under shorts. And God is saying that's the way I view Israel. The most intimate garment that a man wears. God says it's like Israel who is the most intimate people to me.

You remember some years ago there was a commercial it said next yourself you'll love BVDs. Now that's kind of the idea. That's what God is saying. Next to Himself, closest to Him, He loves this people Israel. So this garment represents Israel that He is drawn to be the most intimate nation to Him. But He says wear those shorts but don't wash them. So verse 2, he says, "I bought the linen girdle," as it's called, "according to the word of the Lord and I put it on my loins." And he's wearing it here for a while.

The word of the Lord came to me a second time and said now you take that garment that you've bought which is on your loins and you remember he's being wearing it who knows how long and never washed it. "And you go to the Euphrates." Now that's 200 miles. The hike alone would do in the shorts if there was anything left anyway. But anyway, it says "go to the Euphrates," which is 200 miles and is the border of Babylon and Babylon is the country that's going to come in in judgment.

So He says, "you go and stick it in a cleft of a rock." Now, I don't know about you, but if it was me, I would begin to be wondering what in the world is going on about this time. Anyway, he takes this long journey that he has to cover 200 miles. Now that's many, many days and weeks perhaps. And he takes the shorts there. "It came to pass after many days the Lord said arise go to the Euphrates take the garment from there which I commanded thee to hide there."

You know what happened? He went all the way over there and stuck it in the cleft of the rock, came all the way back and the Lord says now go back and get it. This is a man of great faith. A man of simple obedience. Go all the way back to Babylon, 200 miles, to get those shorts that I was glad I left there. "And so I went to the Euphrates and I digged and I took the garment from the place where I had hidden it and behold it was marred." That is a poor translation. A better one would be gross. It was profitable for nothing he says. It was really rotted.

"The word of the Lord came to me saying thus saith the Lord, after this manner will I mar the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. This evil people who refuse to hear my words, who walk in the stubbornness of their heart and walk after other gods to serve them and to worship them, shall be like this garment which is good for nothing." Do you hear that? God says, Jeremiah you get those and you come back and you take a look at them, dirty, filthy, garment stuck for weeks in the side of a hill, attacked by the sand and the wind and the weather, rotted by the sun. Brought back and you hold them up and let the people have a good look at them and know that that's exactly what it's going to be for them. They're going to be like a good for nothing rotted putrefied piece of cloth.

That's pretty serious isn't it? You know why? Because that's the way they were living. That was an illustration. They had become rotten. Instead of in their intimacy with God maintaining purity and cleanliness, they had become vile and sorted. And God says take them away to Babylon.

And then let Babylon do its work on the garment and then bring it back and show them how it'll be when they have been judged. You see? That's pretty straightforward preaching, wouldn't you say? You see Jeremiah not only had a divine mandate, but he had a direct message. He spoke to the issue of his day. People, we don't want to kid our society. We have to preach sin. We have to preach rottenness in human hearts. We have to preach judgment.

Oh there's the other side. We have to preach love and grace, because that's there too. But Jeremiah summed up this lesson in Chapter 13, verse 15 by saying "Hear and give ear, be not proud for the Lord hath spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God before He causes darkness, before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and while you look for light He turn it into the shadow of death and make it gross darkness." He says, you better change because if you don't change it's going to be a tragic doom. God will cause you to stumble on the dark mountains and you'll be looking for light and you'll fall into blackness.

But that introduces to us a third part of Jeremiah's calling. Yes, a divine mandate, yes, a direct message, but finally and just briefly, also a deep mourning. A deep mourning. Did you look at verse 17 there? You say well boy it seems Jeremiah is pretty cold blooded. Does he do this with glee with a lack of compassion with a sense of superiority? No, no, no. Look at verse 17.

"But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride. And mine eyes shall weep bitterly and run down with tears because the Lord's flock is carried away captive." Listen, I'll tell you something beloved. If you don't preach judgment with tears, you don't preach it the way God intended it. If you can't identify with Jesus who knowing He was going to bring judgment in 70 A.D. on the city of Jerusalem, yet sat over its brow and wept tears and said "Jerusalem, Jerusalem thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often I would have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her brood, but you would not."

If you can't identify with Jeremiah, who could preach out of fire and his bones who could preach judgment like no other Old Testament prophet perhaps and all the while, while you're preaching that judgment have such a heart of compassion for the lost that your eyes run down with tears, then you miss the right mentality.

Look with me for a moment at Chapter 8 and verse 18. Jeremiah says, "When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me. Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people because of those who dwell in a far country is not the Lord in Zion, is not her king in her? Why have they provoked me to anger with their carved images and foreign vanities? The harvest is passed, the summer has ended and we are not saved for the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt. I am black. Dismay has taken hold of me, has his mourning garb on. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"

Chapter 9, "Oh that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." That's the heart of the prophet. Looking forward to what was coming to those people who was heart sick. He didn't preach judgment with an indifferent proud, superiority attitude. Humbly with a broken heart and compassion he preached it. Because they were his people and he loved them. Listen, do you care at all that souls are perishing? Do you care at all? If you cared at all, you would warn. You would recognize the divine mandate, the direct message, and with a deep mourning you would cry.

I wonder sometimes how we can sit around speculating about when the rapture will occur. We can sit around speculating about who the antichrist is. We can become so detached we look at the tribulation when all hell breaks loose, and we do it with a theological eye that has absolutely no grief for the lost. It is better that we should shut our mouths than to have such a conversation.

We are becoming indifferent evangelical eggheads. We know more than we need to. There's so many people stockpiling themselves in Bible studies convinced that the essential thing is to debate semantics. And all we do in such debate is reveal our cold hearts. People are perishing and we're content to be a non-strategic functions doing everything to pad our seat, better our lot, be more comfortable, more successful, and we are icy toward people bound for hell.

Jeremiah was not. He was so grieved in verses 17 and 18, he called for the official mourning women to come and cry. There's nothing wrong with tears. Some people think tears are the act of a coward, but they're not. There are tears of strength in Jeremiah's case. Jerusalem was in laughter, that's the funny part of it. See? They didn't think anything was going to happen. They thought Jeremiah was crazy. They had advanced so far, the party was on, and Jeremiah was a sad man at a party.

They mocked him and they threw him in jail to shut him up because he was raining on their parade. Our tears will not be understood. Our message will not be understood, because the world merrily goes to hell. We may weep alone. But we weep if we care. Spurgeon had a great word. I can identify with this. He said this, "I hate my eyes. I feel as if I could pluck them from their sockets because they will not weep as I desire over poor souls who are perishing."

But mere weeping isn't enough. It isn't enough just to weep. We not only are to have a deep mourning, we are to have a direct message. We must speak. There is hope, you know. There is hope. Even in Jeremiah's case, there was a little remnant who believed and who heard. In Jeremiah

15:11, just listen, "The Lord said verily it shall be well with thy remnant." It's going to be okay for the little group that believe. And you know in America today sometimes I get so upset. I get so distressed. I sometimes have tears in my eyes when I see the things that go on in our country and I see the innocuous useless efforts of a watered down religion in combating it. And I grieve in my spirit and I wonder if anything is ever going to happen in our day for the glory of God and I'm reminded that there will be a remnant.

Jeremiah said in Chapter 33, verse 3, For God he said this, "Call unto me and I will answer thee and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not." Listen for the responding heart there is an answer. For the responding spirit there is salvation. For the one who listens, judgment is averted. In Jeremiah 31:17, "And there is hope in thine end saith the Lord." There's hope. I mean, it isn't all over. There are going to be some that God will reach out and claim for His own.

Are you willing to be faithful. Do you realize that God chose you before the foundation of the world. Do you believe that he wants you to confront this world with the direct message. Is your heart broken so that there's a mourning. Are you willing to be a servant? Or are you just trying to be a success. Do you want to fulfill your God ordained calling or do you just want to be comfortable?

Hear it Jeremiah 8:20, I read it earlier, this is the word from Jeremiah, "The harvest is past. The summer has ended. And we're not saved." In other words, the show is over. It's done. Time and opportunity is gone. What is our response? I think it's more than just calling people to Christ. I think it's confronting their lifestyle and calling for a holiness and a righteousness that pleases God.

Let's pray together. Father, I hear the words of Jeremiah, Chapter 23, verse 5 as he says, "Behold the day has come saith the Lord that I will raise unto David a righteous branch and a king shall reign and prosper and shall execute justice and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely and this is His name, the Lord our righteousness."

Oh Father, we do look to that day, but even in this day know that the Lord our righteousness has made the provision for salvation even now. I pray for any who might be in our midst tonight, who are caught in the doom of a dying nation. That they might be part of that remnant that reaches out to the one who is the Lord our righteousness. To take hold of that nail-pierced hand, the hand of the one who died for them.

And Father, for the rest of us, help us to preach faithfully to rebuke a godless day with tears so they hear the message and see our love and in so hearing and seeing are drawn to the one alone who can save them from the terrible future. Take this people gathered tonight Lord whose hand needs to be set to the plow to work the work they were destined to do. And may they be more content with service than success. That you may receive the glory and if like Jeremiah no one ever listens, may obedience be its own reward and if per chance some are used to reach the remnant may the glory always belong to you.

We thank you in Christ's name. Amen.

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