

Cross Over the Line

by Chuck Smith

Chuck Smith's sermon warns of the dangers of crossing the line with God, emphasizing the importance of true devotion and the consequences of rebellion against Him.

Duration: 32:42

Scripture: Jeremiah 14:11

Topics: "Gods Judgment", "Repentance"

Description

This sermon delves into Psalms 94 and Jeremiah 13-14, emphasizing the consequences of turning away from God and the limit to God's patience when faced with persistent rebellion. It warns about the danger of reaching a point where God's grace turns into judgment, highlighting the importance of wholehearted commitment to God and the sobering reality of God giving up on those who persist in defiance. The parallels between the nation of Judah and modern society are drawn, urging listeners to heed God's warnings and not take His grace for granted.

Transcript

Now shall we turn in our Bibles to Psalm 94 for our scripture reading this morning. I'll read the first and the unnumbered verses. Pastor Brian will lead the congregation in the reading of the even-numbered verses as we stand to read the Word of God.

O Lord God to whom vengeance belongeth, O God to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself. Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth. Render a reward to the proud.

Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph? How long shall they utter and speak hard things, and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves. They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and they afflict thine heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.

And yet they say, the Lord shall not see it, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. Understand ye brutish among the people, and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear shall he not hear. He that formed the eye shall he not see.

He that chastiseth the heathen shall not he correct. He that teacheth man knowledge shall not he know. The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, and that they are vanity.

Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law. That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked. For the Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance.

But judgment shall return unto righteousness, and all the upright in heart shall follow it. Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? Or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity? Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence. When I said, my foot slippeth, thy mercy, O Lord, held me up.

In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul. Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law? They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and they condemn the innocent blood. But the Lord is my defense, and my God is the rock of my refuge.

And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness. Yea, the Lord our God shall cut them off. Let's pray.

Father, we oftentimes marvel at how gracious and long-suffering and patient you are with those that have risen up in rebellion against you, those who have defied your laws, those who have turned against you. And yet, Lord, you are so patient as you deal with man. We realize, Lord, that there is a day coming when you will deal with great judgment against those who have set their hearts against you, who have refused to acknowledge and to commit themselves into following after your law.

Father, we pray that you'll speak to our hearts today. Perhaps there are some that are here that are in that category of sort of violating your grace and your long-suffering. Help them to realize, Lord, that there is a limit to what you will endure before grace turns into judgment.

And Lord, we pray that you'll help us to commit ourselves fully to following after you. In Jesus' name, amen. You may be seated.

Tonight, Pastor Skip will be leading us through the Word, Jeremiah 13 and 14. This morning, we'd like to draw your attention to the 14th chapter, and our text is found in verse 11, but we'll be looking at the chapter up through verse 11. In verse 11, the Lord said to Jeremiah, pray not for this people for their good.

Jeremiah, it's over. Don't pray anymore for their good. Of course, as we go back, we find that Jeremiah has just prayed for their good, and God is saying, no, don't pray anymore for their good.

There is a time we know not when, there is a line we know not where, that marks the destiny of men to exhort sorrow and despair. There is a line, though by man unseen, once it has been crossed, even God himself, in all of his love, has sworn that all is lost. Judah, as a nation, had passed over that line.

So God commands Jeremiah, don't pray anymore for their good. This is actually the third and the last time that God commanded Jeremiah to stop praying for them. Back in chapter 7, verse 16, the Lord said to Jeremiah, therefore, pray not for this people, neither lift up a cry or a prayer for them, neither make intercession to me, for I will not hear you.

In chapter 11, verse 14, the Lord said, therefore, pray not for this people, neither lift up a cry or a prayer for them, for I will not hear in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble. And here now, for the last time, in verse 11, then said the Lord unto me, pray not for this people, for their good. How sad and how tragic it is

when the nation or a person has gone over the line that God then commands, don't pray anymore for them.

They've committed the unpardonable sin. All hope for them is gone. You who today are still saying no to God's offer of salvation through Jesus Christ, you don't know how close you might be to that line when God will offer to you salvation for the last time.

And if you should reject it, God would say, don't pray anymore for their good, for I will not hear it. The nation of Judah was going through a great crisis at this time. They were in a very severe drought.

We are told that the children would be sent with their vessels to the wells to draw water, but the wells had gone dry and the children came back with empty vessels, heads covered in shame, because there was no water. We are told that the farmers went out to plow the field, but because of the lack of rain, the ground was hardened. They couldn't get a plow through it.

They couldn't cultivate the soil, and thus they couldn't plant their crops. Their heads were covered in shame. We're told that the deer, when they brought forth their young, forsook the little deer because there was no grass for it.

We're told that the donkeys were sniffing, trying to catch a scent of food someplace, but were perishing because the drought was so great. The Bible taught that these actions were often God's judgment upon a people, and I think that oftentimes what is referred to as acts of God are things that God has allowed in nature to bring people to the realization that we need to turn our lives, turn our nation over to God once again. That God does allow national catastrophes in order to awaken people to their need of dependence upon God.

In this drought, Jeremiah had started to pray for the people. He admitted that they deserved the judgment of God because they had backslidden so far away from God, and they were sinning against the Lord. And so he admitted that this is something that we really have coming to us.

We deserve it. But he was pleading for the mercies of God. Lord, you are the hope of Israel, and you have saved us in our time of trouble, and you dwell in the midst of us.

We're called, Lord, by your name. And he pleaded, Lord, please don't leave us. But the word of the Lord came to the people, and he said to the people, you have loved to wander away from me.

They would not remain true to God. They still believed in God. They still acknowledged God, but they loved other things more than they loved God.

In a very dangerous and yet a very deceitful place, when a person still acknowledges God, they still believe in God, but where he is not really their God. There are other gods that have been enthroned in their lives, and he doesn't really have first place in their lives anymore. God has a place in their lives, but it wasn't first place.

They could still talk the talk, but they were no longer walking the walk. It's easy to go on and talk, to talk about how wonderful God is, how good God is, and, oh, God has been so good to us, and to talk it. But do we really walk it? Words sometimes can be very cheap.

We can make acknowledgment by word, or we can talk about our devotion. We can talk about how much we love God, and how much we appreciate God, but oftentimes it's just empty words. There isn't substance behind it.

Like the fellow who called up his girlfriend, and he sought to express to her the depth of his commitment and love for her. He said, Oh, darling, if you were in Europe, I would try to swim the Atlantic just to be by your side. I couldn't stand being away from you.

If you were on the moon, I would endeavor to fly to the moon just to be near you, because I just can't stand being away from you. And by the way, I'm coming over tonight, providing it isn't raining. You know, we can talk the talk.

We can talk of commitment. We can talk of love. But when it comes right down to the rubber meeting the road, it's not there.

It's all just empty talk. And that's what happened with Judah. They wandered away from God.

Oh, they were still talking. They were still talking about God. But if the choice came as to spending time with God or seeking their own pleasure, pleasure won out.

If it was a matter of reading the Bible or reading some pulp magazine, the Bible would lose out and the pulp magazine would win. The Lord said, You've not only wandered, but you have refrained your feet from, you have not refrained your feet from walking after other gods. They were pursuing other paths to happiness.

They were looking for fulfillment and pleasures in the service to other gods. And so the Lord declares that he no longer accepts them. They've gone too far.

They've gone beyond the limits of God's grace. As God said to Noah, My spirit will not always strive with man. In that there is a blessing, there is a curse.

The blessing is that God's spirit does strive with man. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. And so God sends his spirit to strive to turn away a person from a sinful path, a destructive path.

But the curse is there can come a day when God will withdraw his spirit and God will say, All right, it's enough. Don't pray for their good anymore. I will not hear you.

And thus Judah was in that place. God is saying to Jeremiah, don't pray anymore for their good. You can come to a place where God will finally give up on you.

God is very patient. He's very long suffering, but you can come to the place where God will just say, Well, I give up and you will be given up by God to follow after your own lust and your own way. The spirit of God will no longer strive with your heart.

Paul in Romans 1:24 talks about God giving up. Wherefore, God also gave them up to uncleanness because of the lust of their own hearts. He gave them up to dishonor their own bodies between themselves again in verse 26 of chapter one.

For this cause, God gave them up to vile affections for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature. God declared the iniquity of Judah and the time had come when God said, I must now judge you for your iniquity. In the book of Hebrews, we're warned if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins.

Only a certain fearful looking for of his judgment and fiery indignation, which will devour his adversaries. For if a person despised Moses law, he was put to death without mercy. If two or three people would witness against him of how much worse do you suppose the punishment will be for a person who has trodden under his foot, the son of God, who has counted the blood by which he made the covenant for the forgiveness of our sins and unholy thing.

And it was done despite to the spirit of grace. For we know him who has said, vengeance is mine. I will repay, saith the Lord.

And again, the Lord shall judge his people. And the writer said, it's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God. So God has promised their sins are too great.

And he's going to visit them now for their sins. The Lord is going to visit them in judgment. They have passed over the line.

There was no turning back. They've gone beyond the point of no return. And that's when God said to Jeremiah, do not pray anymore for their good.

A sad day in the life of an individual or in the life of a nation. When God says to his prophet, do not pray anymore for their good. I've given up on them.

The day of grace is over. The day of judgment has come. We have to acknowledge that God was very long suffering.

He was very patient with them. He had given them warning after warning, chance after chance. But they continued turning their backs on him.

When my boys were young and when they had done things that needed to be taken care of and disciplined for, I would sit them down and I would go over the things that they had done and tell them the reason why I must discipline them. And usually the disciplining was a good spanking. And oftentimes they'd say, last chance, dad, last chance.

And usually I'd give them that last chance. I was a softy. I was poor on discipline.

But so many times I think with God, as God begins the disciplinary process with us, we're saying last chance, God, and he has given us over and over again that last chance. So it was with the nation of Judah. God had given them over and over to the last chance, but now it was just too much.

They had gone too far. They had gone beyond the last chance. They had the last chance.

God basically had done all that was possible to make them his people, that they might bring forth fruit that God desired from them as a nation. The fruit of the spirit is love. And God wanted them to love him supremely.

Oh, they loved him, but not supremely. Oh, they loved him, but there were other things that they loved more than God. You might be in that situation today.

Oh yes, you love him. There's no question about that. There's no doubt you love him, but there are things that you love more than him.

And that's the problem. The Bible said thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all of thy heart, with all of thy soul, with all thy mind, with all thy strength. Jesus said this is the greatest of all commandments.

And many of you are violating the most important and the greatest of all of the commandments because God is not first in your life. He has a place, but not first place in your life. Back in Isaiah chapter five, there is an interesting parable where the Lord likens the nation of Judah to a vineyard.

He said, I will sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved has a vineyard in a very fruitful hill. He fenced it.

He gathered out the stones thereof. He planted it with the choicest of vines. He built a tower in the midst of it.

He also made a wine press in it, and he looked for it to bring forth good grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, oh inhabitants of Jerusalem, men of Judah, judge, I pray you between me and my vineyard. What could I have done to my vineyard more than I've already done? Why is it that when I looked for it to bring forth good fruit, that it brought forth bad fruit? Now, I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard.

I will remove the hedge of my protection from it. It shall be destroyed. I will break down the wall around it.

It will be trodden down. I will lay it waste. It will not be cultivated by me anymore, for there shall come up briars and thorns, and I will command the clouds that they rain not on it.

For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah is his pleasant plant. And he looked for judgment, but he found corruption. He looked for righteousness, but there was only a cry of distress.

The nation had now come to that place that was prophesied by Isaiah. Now is the time for judgment. Don't pray anymore for their good, Jeremiah.

They've gone too far. There's no more grace to be extended to them. I look at the nation of Israel at that time, and I look at our nation, and I see very disturbing parallels.

Ours is a nation that is forsaking God. It's no longer bringing forth good fruit, but bad fruit. We're a nation, as Judah, wandering from God's path.

It was God that made our nation great. We printed on our currency and stamped on the coins, in God we trust. There was a concerted effort to acknowledge God and the importance of having God guide and direct our nation by our early founding fathers.

But now there is a concerted effort to turn our nation away from the only true God that we might worship the gods of this world, the gods of sex and pleasure and materialism, the gods that cannot see, cannot hear, and cannot help when the time of national peril comes. In our public schools, the children cannot

pray to God, but children are learning prayers to Allah as they study Islam. We cannot post the Ten Commandments, but we can teach the children the use of condoms and pass them out to the children who want them.

Surely the nation of Israel could not be much worse than our nation today. How close are we to that line? I don't know. It is by men unseen, but once it has been crossed, even God himself in all his love has sworn that all is lost.

When God is through, he's through. When God said, I give up, I've had it. The prayers, the weeping, the repenting is of no value.

God has turned them over to judgment. God said, when they fast, I will not hear their cry. When they offer burnt offerings and sacrifices, I will not accept them.

I will consume them by the sword and by famine and by pestilence. When God's grace has been exhausted, there remains only that certain fearful looking for the judgment and the fiery indignation by which God will devour his adversaries. Truly, it is a fearful thing to fall in the hands of a living God.

Jesus came to this world. He died for you and for me so that we would not have to face the judgment of God for our sins. And by receiving him and by loving him, you will not perish, but you will have everlasting life.

This story is a warning, a warning to each of us that the door of grace will not always be open, that God owes us nothing, that he can close the door of salvation at any time he pleases, and you can find yourself hopeless hopelessly forever on the outside of his grace and mercy. There's a great danger of procrastination because someday you will hear God's final call to you to accept his offer of salvation. And this could be it if you only knew God's final call to you today.

There is a line we know not where that marks the destiny of man to its sorrow and despair. How close are you to that line? You don't know, I don't know, only God knows. But know there is a line that once you pass over there's no return.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you that you are a gracious, merciful God, long-suffering, patient, kind. We pray, Father, that we would not violate that patience by our own stubborn refusal to listen to your voice and to submit our lives to follow in your path.

Lord, as you look over the congregation today, we realize that it's possible that for some here today, this is your final call to them to repent from their sin, to forsake their sin, and to get things right with you. And we realize, Lord, how solemn is this moment. There are those that are close to that place where you're about to say, don't pray anymore for their good.

I will not hear you. We pray, Father, that in this solemn moment, there will not be a stubborn resistance any longer to your Spirit. But may there be, Lord, a surrendering of that life and of that heart to you.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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