

(Through the Bible) Jeremiah 6-10

by Chuck Smith

God warns the people of Jerusalem of impending destruction and calls them to repentance, promising to cause them to dwell in the land forever if they amend their ways and doings.

Duration: 1:20:20

Scripture: Jeremiah 3:6, Jeremiah 6:9, Jeremiah 6:11, Jeremiah 6:13-16

Topics: "Obedience To God", "Judgment And Consequences"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of obeying the inner conscience that God has placed in each person. He questions the wisdom of those who claim to be wise but reject the word of the Lord. The preacher warns that if one rejects Jesus Christ as their Savior, the death of Jesus is in vain for them. He also highlights the increasing robbery and downfall of society, drawing parallels to the downfall of Judah. God challenges people to evaluate their lives and turn back to the old paths for rest and salvation. However, many refuse to walk in those ways. The preacher concludes by warning of the consequences of disobedience and the impending judgment from a great nation.

Transcript

Let's turn now in our Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 6. Jeremiah is warning the people of the impending destruction that is coming to Jerusalem because they have forsaken God and turned after the pagan idols of the heathen. And in his message to them, chapter 6 is a continuation actually of a message that was started way back in about chapter 3, verse 6. And so, this message is a continuation. And here he is warning the children of Benjamin.

Now, Benjamin was a very small tribe and some of those from the tribe of Benjamin were there in Jerusalem. And he is warning them to flee out of the midst of Jerusalem. Blow the trumpet at Tekoa.

Tekoa is an area out in the wilderness, actually beyond Bethlehem towards the Dead Sea. It's about the last outpost, really, before you get to that rugged canyon cliff area where nobody lives, except wild mountain goats. Tekoa happened to be the place where the prophet Amos was from.

And set up a sign of fire in Beth Hasrim, for evil appeareth out of the north and great destruction. So, he is warning of this destruction that will be coming from Babylon, who will be invading from the north as they come down through Syria. I have likened the daughter of Zion to a beautiful and delicate woman.

But the shepherds with their flock shall come unto her. They shall pitch their tents against her round about and they shall feed everyone in his place. Prepare ye war against her.

Arise and let us go up at noon. Woe unto us, for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out. Arise and let us go by night and let us destroy her palaces.

And so, the daughter of Zion, Jerusalem, is likened unto a beautiful, delicate woman who is attacked from daylight on through in the evening. For thus hath the Lord of hosts said, Hew down trees and cast a mount against Jerusalem. This is the city that is to be visited.

She is wholly oppression in the midst of her. The cutting down of trees, of course, was to make the rams, battering rams to break down the walls into the gates and so forth. Now, as a fountain, and here's God's description as he looks at Jerusalem, and it's really quite descriptive.

As a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness. As a fountain is just bubbling out with waters. So, Jerusalem is just overflowing with wickedness.

It just is proceeding out of Jerusalem. Violence and spoil is heard in her, before me continually are grief and wounds. So, because of the turning away from God, a lot of violence, a lot of robbery, a lot of assaulting of people.

Now, as we have shared with you, Jeremiah was called to oversee the death of the nation. He was to watch it in its final agony, before it died. He was to see it go under the heel of Babylon.

And he was helpless to stop it. All he could do is just stand and warn them, and then watch the whole thing happen. It is sad to see a nation die.

And as we read the prophet of Jeremiah, we see the symptoms that were bringing on, or telling at least, the death of the nation. The prophecy of Jeremiah becomes very relevant to us today, because many of the things that were transpiring there in Jerusalem, there in Judah, are transpiring in the United States today. So, as Jeremiah describes the condition of the violence that fills her streets, the oppression, the spoiling.

We look at our land, and we look how violent crime is increasing. We look at how robbery and all is increasing. And we see that these same indicators are here, that brought the downfall of Judah.

Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate a land that is not inhabited. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, they shall thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel as a vine. Turn back your hand as the grape gathered into the baskets.

She's going to be plucked from all of her fruit as the gleaners would go through afterwards, and they'd pick everything that was left. So, Israel, or Jerusalem, is to be left picked clean without anything left. To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised and they cannot hearken.

Behold, the word of the Lord is to them a reproach. They have no delight in it. So, the difficulty of speaking to the people, they weren't listening anymore.

They weren't listening to the voice of God any longer. They closed their hearts to God, and the word of the Lord to them was just a reproach. They had no delight in hearing God's word.

Therefore, God declares, I am full of fury, or Jeremiah declared, I am full of the fury of the Lord. I am weary with holding it in. I will pour it out upon the children of Brom, upon the assembly of the young men together, for even the husband with the wife shall be taken, and the age with him that is full of days.

They're all to be destroyed, the old men, the children, and their houses shall be turned unto others with their fields and their wives together. For I will stretch out my hand upon the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord, for from the least of them even unto the greatest of them, everyone is given to covetousness, and from the prophet even unto the priest, everyone is dealing falsely. So, the conditions of the land.

The people were filled with covetousness, and the priests and the prophets were corrupted. And they have healed, God said, the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace. And so the prophets, in already declaring, oh, you know, things are going to be alright, don't have to worry, you know, peace, peace, when judgment was hanging over their heads.

Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No. They were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush. Therefore, they shall fall among them that fall, and at the time that I visit them, they shall be cast down, saith the Lord.

Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, we will not walk therein. Now, God is challenging.

He's saying, look, just stand still for a minute. Put on the brakes. Take a look at your life.

Take a look at what's happening. The things that are going on around you. Make an evaluation of yourself and of the life you're living.

Just stand in the ways and see. Look what's happening to our world. Look what's happening to this generation in which we live.

He said, and ask for the old paths. That is the path of righteousness, walking with the Lord. Wherein is the good way, and you will find rest for your souls.

Jesus said, come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. This rest is always associated with committing your life to God. There's a glorious rest in this.

The old path of just full commitment of myself to the Lord. You know, when you commit your life to Jesus Christ, the very first consciousness that you have is that of a real deep peace and rest. In fact, when you go home, you feel so peaceful that as you lie there on your bed, you hate to go to sleep.

It just feels so good. The war is over. I'm not running from God anymore.

I'm not fighting God anymore. God, I belong to you, and I want to just walk with you, and I want to just serve you, Lord. And just that beautiful rest that you have in your soul as you've committed now your life to Jesus Christ.

And the very first consciousness of your new life is that of just a deep-seated, beautiful rest. Rest for your souls. God promises it.

But people caught up in their covetousness as they're lusting after so many things, they say, Oh no, not for us, man. We're out to get all we can, you know. And off they go in the furor, in the frenzy, in the panic of life.

The Lord said, Also I have set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken. God said, I'm blowing the trumpet.

It's a trumpet of warning. Judgment is coming. They say, Ah, forget it.

Therefore, hear ye nations, and know, O congregation that is among them. Hear, O earth. Now, it's tragic.

Hear God's... You know, the people aren't listening to Him anymore, so He starts talking to the earth. It's a sad day when people no longer listen to God and He's got to talk to the earth. Hear, O earth.

Behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened to my words nor to my law, but they have rejected it. To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba? What value are your religious activities? The sweet cane from a far country. Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me.

They're just... God says, I won't accept them. In the Psalms it says, Sacrificings and offerings thou wouldst not. In fact, you don't care for them.

A broken and a contrite spirit you won't turn away. There are too many people that are trying to substitute religion for relationship. God wants a relationship with you.

A living relationship with you. And He doesn't care for your religious activities unless there's a relationship behind it. But just the religious activities for religious activities sake is of no value at all.

There's got to be that vital relationship behind it in order that it be meaningful. So God said, Forget the sacrifice. I don't care for them.

I won't even accept them. Therefore, thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will lay stumbling blocks before the people, and the fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them, and their neighbors and their friends shall perish. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, the people cometh from the north country, and a great nation shall be raised from the sides of the earth, and they shall lay hold on bow and spear.

They are cruel. They have no mercy. Their voice roareth like the sea.

They ride upon horses, set in array as men for war against thee, O daughter of Zion. We have heard of the fame thereof. Our hands wax feeble.

Anguish has taken hold of us, and pain as a woman in travail. Go not forth into the field, nor walk by the way, for the sword of the enemy and the fear is on every side. O daughter of my people, gird thee now with sackcloth, which is a garment of mourning.

Wallow thyself in ashes. Make thee mourning as for an only son, most bitter lamentation, for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us. I have set thee for a tower and a fortress among my people that thou mayest know and try their way.

Now God is saying this to Jeremiah. The end of the message is there. And now he's talking to Jeremiah.

He said, I set thee for a tower and a fortress among my people that you may know and try their way. They are all grievous revolters, walking with slanders. They are as brass and iron.

They are all corruptors. The bellows are burned. The lead is consumed in the fire.

The founder melteth in vain, for the wicked are not plucked away. Reprobate silver or refuse silver shall the men call them because the Lord hath rejected them. So God tells Jeremiah that your ministry isn't going to really be successful or prosper.

The people have gone, but yet I've set you there in the midst as a tower. So, chapter 7. King Josiah, who was reigning at the beginning of Jeremiah's ministry, in the 18th year of his reign, ordered the temple restored. It had fallen into disrepair.

It sort of lay in ruins. They had, in the outer courts, built altars unto Bel and unto Molech, and they had forsaken the worship of the Lord in the temple for years. So, Josiah now ordered that the temple be restored.

And he gave to Hilkiah the high priest a great sum of money that he might hire carpenters and all, that they might come in and just refurbish the whole place. And while they were in cleaning out the debris and all, they found a scroll of the law. And so, as they read the law of the Lord unto King Josiah, he began to weep as he saw how far they had gone in their turning away from God and how God in the law had promised His judgments would come if they forsook Him and forsook the law.

And so, Josiah cried out unto the Lord. He was really disturbed when the law was read. Deeply convicted for the evil of the people.

And the word of the Lord came unto a prophetess whose name was Huldah. And she sent a message to the king and said because of his attitude of repentance and turning to God, that the evil that God was going to bring upon the people, the judgment would not come during his reign, but after his reign. Josiah was the last of the good kings of Judah.

After his death, his son plunged downhill just straight down. He only reigned for three months until he was taken out of the way and another king set up by the pharaoh of Egypt. But after Josiah's death, things just went downhill fast.

Now, as they read to Josiah the book of the law, he saw how that the Lord had ordered that the people were to gather together each year for the Passover feast there in Jerusalem. And so he ordered a great celebration of the Passover in the 18th year of his reign as king. And the people were invited to come and according to the record in 2 Kings, this was one of the grandest observances of the Passover in the history of the nation as far as the number of people attending and the sacrifices that were offered.

And so there was a great popular religious movement. As the people could see that their king wanted to serve Jehovah, it became a popular thing for the people to go to church, go to the temple. It's always dangerous when a person's motivation of going is because it's popular.

You know, everybody's going, so join the crowd. Rather than coming out of a desire of your own heart to know God and to worship God. So the Lord came to Jeremiah and said, Now go down to the gate of the Lord's house and proclaim these words.

Say, Hear the word of the Lord, all ye of Judah that enter into these gates to worship Jehovah. So in the midst of this great movement, all these people coming into the temple, he goes down to the temple gates and he starts to cry unto the people. Hear the word of the Lord, all of you that are coming here to worship Jehovah.

Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Trust ye not in lying words saying the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these. Now the prophet is rebuking the people that are coming to worship because number one, they are coming out of wrong motivation.

Somehow they feel that because the temple has been restored and rebuilt, that they are going to be safe now from their enemies. They haven't altered their lifestyle at all. They're still doing all of the same wicked things that they were doing before.

They're still burning their incense to Bell. They're still sacrificing their children to the fires of Molech. They're doing all of these abominable things as far as God is concerned, but now we've got the temple and because the temple is here, surely God is going to spare us.

And they were looking at the temple as sort of a magical charm, an amulet of some sort that is going to keep us from being destroyed. But the prophet is declaring you're trusting in lying words. When you think that just the fact that you have a temple, that that building is going to somehow be a magical charm for you to keep you from the judgments that are coming upon you because of your deeds, your ways, your activities.

God, again, is interested in a relationship with you that changes your life. And coming to church isn't really worth that unless your heart and your life is dedicated to God. There are a lot of people who will try to appease their conscience resting in church membership, resting in past spiritual experiences or past rituals.

But God declares here that you are trusting in lying words, that there is no salvation in these things. The church cannot save you. A ritual cannot save you.

Only a living, life-changing faith in Jesus Christ can save you. And if your faith in Christ has not altered your life, then your faith must be challenged and questioned. If I would say to you, folks, I believe that there is a bomb planted in this church, an extremely powerful bomb that's going to go off in three minutes.

I believe this because somehow I just have a strong feeling that this bomb is about ready to explode. And I just go on and ignore it and just keep talking and everything else. You say, oh, you don't really believe there's a bomb there.

Your actions are not in keeping with what you say you believe. If I really believed there was a bomb here, I'd say, alright, now no one panic, but let's all get up and exit as quickly as you can out of this place, you know. My actions would agree with what I declare I believe.

There's got to be a harmony if I really believe something between what I believe and the actions of my life. And if you say that you really believe in Jesus Christ, that He is the Son of God, and that He died to save us from our sins, then that belief should be matched by your life and your lifestyle. It is wrong and it is inconsistent for me to talk about my believing in God and believing in the Spirit and all and to be living totally after my flesh.

Now that was exactly what was going on in this situation. Their words, they were deceiving themselves with their words because they could mouth the right phrases. They had deceived themselves and they were trusting in lying words rather than trusting in a living relationship with God.

And so the prophet is warning them to not trust in these lying words just because they were awed by the fact, oh, the temple of Jehovah, beautiful, gorgeous, don't you feel good? Temple of Jehovah, you know. I don't care what you feel, it's what you're doing that God is interested in. And so he said, amend your ways, your doings, and that I will cause you to dwell in this place.

I'll protect you then. I will be with you then. I'll be your defense then.

But this temple isn't going to save you. This building isn't going to save you. If you want me to work in your behalf, then change your ways.

For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between man and his neighbor, if you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, the widow, and if you do not shed innocent blood in this place, neither walk after the other gods to your own hurt, then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, forever and ever. Hey, if you live right, if you walk right, you can live here forever. I will be a defense to you.

I will watch over you. I will keep you. But not just because you have the temple.

Not just because you have a religious observance. Let me see it proved in your life and in your lifestyle. Amend your ways and the things you're doing.

Start living right. God wants us to be honest. God wants us to be just.

God wants us to be fair. God does not want us to oppress the poor or to take advantage of another person's situation. God wants us to love each other as we love ourselves.

Now, is there anything evil with that? Wouldn't it be wonderful to live in a world where people were doing what God wanted them to do? How glorious this world would be if we were all doing what God wants us to do. If we were all genuinely loving one another and caring for one another. Interested in one another.

Helping one another. Lifting the person that has fallen. Helping the person that is weak.

If we were all concerned and loving one another, it would be a glorious world to live in. And that's what God requires and that's what God wants of us. But the people were all doing their own thing.

They were all living for their own selfish motivations. And they were all so covetous. Trying to gain for themselves and not caring who they hurt or who was destroyed by it.

And their greed had overcome them. God said, so just having a temple, just coming to temple, that's not going to do it. I want more than that.

Just coming to church, that's not going to do it. God wants more than that. He wants a commitment of your life.

He wants you to change your ways. He wants you to start living according to His will. Behold, the Prophet said, you trust in lying words that cannot profit or save you.

The words cannot save you. Mouthing right phrases cannot save you. Mouthing the Apostle's Creed won't save you.

Mouthing the 23rd Psalm or John 3.16 won't save you. Salvation is more than just a creed that is recited. It is a commitment of my heart and life to Jesus Christ.

So the Lord shows the inconsistency. Will you steal and murder and commit adultery and swear falsely and burn incense and a bell and walk after other gods whom you know not and come and stand before me in this house which is called by my name and say, oh, we're free to do all of these abominations. You say, oh, could people really do that? Could they be committing adultery and fornication and all during the week and then come to the house of God and say, oh, we have the grace of God that covers us and we have freedom in Christ to do anything we want.

And so the Prophet speaks out against it. It was happening then. It happens today.

There are people who live after their own flesh during the week. They're dishonest in their business practices. They lie.

They steal. They commit adultery. They commit fornication.

And then they dare to come and stand in the house of God and think because they've come to the house of God that that should somehow take care of all they've done because after all, Lord, I put a five in the plate last week, you know, and buy my way out. No way. God says, change your way.

Amend your life. Amend your doings. And then I will keep you and I will watch over you and you will dwell safely in this place.

Is this house, God said, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord. You remember when Jesus came to the temple and He found those that were changing money and selling doves. He took and made a whip.

And He began to overturn the tables of the money changers and He began to drive them out. And He said, My Father's house was to be called a house of prayer, but you've made it a den of thieves. The Lord said, It's my house, which is called by my name.

You see, they were saying, Oh, the temple of Jehovah. The temple of Jehovah. It was called by His name, but it became a gathering place for a bunch of robbers.

A den of robbers. Now, the Lord says, Go to the place where you used to worship in Shiloh. The place that was built there to worship Me.

Where I set My name at the beginning. Now, when they first came into the land and began to inherit the land, the first place the tabernacle was set was in Shiloh. And so God said, Go up to Shiloh.

The place where My name was placed at the first. And see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel. Look at its desolation.

And now because you have done all of these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but you heard not. And I called you, but you did not answer. Therefore, will I do unto this house, which is called by My name, wherein you trust.

See, they're trusting in the house, not in God. People trusting in the church, not in Christ. Trusting in a ritual, not in a living relationship.

And unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. I'm going to do the same thing to this place. I'm going to make it desolate.

I'm going to destroy it. And I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brothers, even the whole seed of Ephraim, that is the northern tribes of Israel. Therefore, and now God is saying to Jeremiah after the message, Therefore, Jeremiah, pray not for this people, neither lift up cry, nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to Me, for I will not hear thee.

Ooh, what solemn, harsh words. As God says, that's it, Jeremiah. I've had it.

Don't cry to Me for them. Don't pray to Me for them. Don't lift up your voice anymore for them, because I won't even hear you.

You remember back in the book of Genesis when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, that the Lord looked throughout the earth and there was none righteous except Noah and his generation. And the Lord spake unto Noah saying, My spirit will not always strive with man. Now, in that there is a blessing and there is a curse.

There is a blessing that God's Spirit strives with us at all. That's so beautiful. That God would strive with me.

That God would take time for me. That God is interested enough in me that He sends His Spirit to strive with me to live the right life and to follow after Him in order that I might receive all of the blessings and the goodness and the glory of being a child of God. God actually strives with me for something which is so good for me.

It seems to me that men would be clamoring after Him so that God does strive with man as a blessing. But the curse is God won't always strive. A person can turn his back upon the Lord.

He can harden himself to God to the place where God's Spirit will no longer strive. And with Jeremiah, God will say, Alright, that's it. They've gone too far.

Don't pray anymore for their good. If you do, I'm not going to hear you. Don't cry unto me for them.

That's it. No more. I don't want to hear another prayer.

I don't want you to ask anymore for them because I won't hear you. When God says of a person, That's it. They've gone too far.

You say, Is such a thing possible? The Scripture teaches that it is. God said, Ephraim is joined to her idols. Let her alone.

Don't try anymore. Just let her alone. Paul tells us in Romans, Wherefore God has given them up.

How tragic when God gives a person up. When God gives up on a man. Now you see, God isn't under any obligation to strive with you at all.

The fact that he strives at all is just, you know, it's just a marvel that I can't fully understand. He's under no obligation. God doesn't owe me a thing.

But yet, because it is love, he strives with man. But there comes a time, we know not when, a place we know not where, that marks the destiny of man twixt 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.

In John 12.38 it said, Therefore they could not believe. It didn't say they would not believe. They could not believe.

It came to the place where they could not believe. They had gone too far. And when God says to Jeremiah, Therefore pray thou not for this people, neither lift up a crying or prayer for them, neither make intercession to me, for I will not hear.

The people have gone too far. They've gone beyond the point of no return. Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough to make cakes to the Queen of Heaven.

They're worshipping Ashtoreth, Semiramis, the Queen of Heaven, the Goddess of Fertility, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods that they may provoke me to anger. So here, God's people, the little children are out gathering sticks, and the fathers, they bring them home to the fathers who kindle the fire, and the women are there kneading the dough so they can bake these little cakes to the Goddess of Fertility, Semiramis, the Queen of Heaven. God said that's it.

That's more than I can take. Don't pray anymore. Don't intercede anymore.

I'm through. I've had it. That's it.

Do they provoke me to anger, saith the Lord? Do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces? Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, upon the beasts, upon the trees of the field, upon the fruit of the ground, and it shall burn and shall not be quenched. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Put your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices and eat flesh. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices.

But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice. God said I didn't set up sacrifices to begin with, the burnt offerings and the peace offerings. God didn't establish them until after He had given the law, and they disobeyed the law.

Then God set the sacrifices for burnt offering and all. But He said, I said unto them, Obey my voice and I will be your God. You will be my people.

Walk in all of the ways that I have commanded you and it will be well unto you. Just obey me, God says, and walk with me in harmony with my desires and wishes. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but they walked in the counsels and the imaginations of their own evil hearts.

And they went backward, away from me, instead of towards me. Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have even sent unto you all of my servants, the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them. God had not left them.

From the beginning, He had sent His messengers, His servants to warn them and to challenge them to commit their lives to God. Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but they hardened their neck and they did worse than their fathers. Therefore, thou shalt speak all these words unto them, but they will not hearken.

Now you go out, Jeremiah, and say the words, but they're not going to listen. Oh man, what a heavy duty trip Jeremiah had. You know, it's a ministry that has a promise of failure.

Now, know this. Though the ministry was destined for failure from the beginning, yet it was a necessary ministry that God required of Jeremiah, and because Jeremiah was faithful and obedient, God blessed Jeremiah as His instrument, though there was to be no success come from his ministry. Now, we have in our minds sort of a carryover in our service to the Lord.

We have a carryover from the secular world concepts. For if I'm a salesman, I only get commissions when I get the signature on the dotted line. And so, sometimes I feel discouraged and defeated because I didn't get the signature on the dotted line.

I witnessed to them, but they rejected the witness. And I feel, oh, I'm so defeated, you know, because they didn't hear. Oh, what a waste of time.

You know, I spent all afternoon with them and then they rejected anyhow. Oh, what a waste of time. Wait a minute.

Not so. God rewards you for the witnessing whether or not anybody ever listens, hearkens, or changes. You see, God only requires that I witness for Him.

And God knows that some of the witnessing is just going to fall on deaf ears. But He still requires me to do it. Now, Jeremiah, you go out and speak all these things.

Oh, they're not going to listen to you. That's all right. You go out and tell them anyhow.

Because God wants His witness to be left so that men are without excuse. So God requires us to go out and to witness and not always are we going to be successful. That doesn't make any difference.

It has no difference and no standing at all upon my reward when I stand before God. God will not reward me for the number of people that responded to my witness. God will reward me for witnessing.

God will reward me the same if ten responded or no one responded. Because the response isn't my territory at all. That's God's territory.

Only God can create a response in the heart of the people. It isn't up to me to argue people into a faith or believing in Jesus Christ. It's only up to me to witness to them of God and of God's Word and of God's truth.

Then it's up to the Spirit of God to take that witness and do with it what He wants in the heart of the individual. And quite often we don't know the real work of the Spirit in the heart of a person. I had a drunk man come to the door one night all upset because he had been in a big fight with his family.

They had called the police because he had ripped the phone off the wall. He was drunk and violent. He wanted help.

I said, well, what do you want? He said, I want to get right with God. I want you to call my wife and all this kind of stuff and tell her how horrible she is and treating me like she has. He said, I can't get anybody to pray through with me.

Well, I didn't really know what he meant by that, but I thought, well, I'll pray with you as long as you want to pray. So I took him over to the church, which was next door to our house. And we started praying together.

And the first half hour, he was praying vengeance and judgment upon all those that had treated him so wrong. And I just sort of prayed along quietly. Then after the first half hour, he began to change and say, Lord, I haven't been so good myself and I have done some pretty bad things.

And he began to really get somewhere, I thought, in prayer as he changed the whole tenor of the prayer from vindictiveness upon those that he felt were treating him ill and he began to really ask God for himself, confess his own guilt and ask God to help him. And I was encouraged by that. And the next half hour, he was praying about himself and seeking God to really work in his life.

And then he went into a period of just sort of praising the Lord and I could tell that he was getting sleepy because he would say, Oh, thank you, Lord. And so finally, he was, Oh, thank you, Jesus. And he sort of drifted off.

So I continued to pray for a little while until I was sure that he was sound asleep. And so I got a blanket and covered him and went home. Because he said he couldn't go home.

They kicked him out. So I thought, well, he's sleeping in the church, it wouldn't hurt. So when I got home, my wife said, Well, how did it go? I said, I really don't know.

You know when you're dealing with a man who's drunk, you really don't know how, you know, whether it really got through or took or whatever, you know, you just really don't know. Next morning, I went over to the church and the blanket was all folded and lying there and he was gone. But the next evening at 6:30, dressed in a suit, looking sharp as could be, he was at the door.

He says, When in the world does the Bible study start? And I knew God got through. But you never really know always at the time. You know, God can be doing a work in a person's life and you do not really know it until you see the fruit and the evidence of it later.

But Jeremiah's ministry was destined for failure. They're not going to hearken. You're going to call to them but they're not going to answer.

But you shall say unto them, This is a nation that obeyed not the voice of Jehovah their God, nor received correction. Truth is perished and is cut off from their mouth. Cut off your hair, O Jerusalem.

Cast it away. Take up a lamentation on the high places. For the Lord hath rejected and forsaken the generation of Israel.

For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the Lord. They have set their abominations in the house, which is called by my name to pollute it. They had altars to Baal and all right in the temple of God.

They have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom. Our Gehenna there on the outskirts of Jerusalem, the Hinnom Valley that goes on down on the outside of the Mount of

Zion. To burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command of them, neither came it into my heart.

God said that never would I require the sacrifice of the children unto me. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be called Topheth, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter, where they shall be buried in Topheth until there is no place left to bury them. And the carcasses of these people will be meat for the fowls of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth, and none shall frighten them away.

Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, the inhabitants, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of merriment and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, the voice of the bride, for the land shall be desolate. Now you go and you warn them, they're not going to listen, but I'm going to do it. Now at that time, saith the Lord, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah and the bones of his princes and the bones of the priests, the bones of the prophets, the bones of the inhabitants, out of their graves.

And they shall spread them before the sun and the moon and all of the hosts of heaven, whom they have loved and whom they have served and after whom they have walked and whom they have sought and whom they have worshiped. They shall not be gathered nor be buried, that they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth. And death shall be chosen rather than life by the residue of them that remain in this evil family, which remain in all of the places whither I have driven them, saith the Lord of hosts.

Now he talks about them worshiping the sun, the moon, the hosts of heaven. But this verse 3 is interesting to me. Death shall be chosen rather than life by the residue of them that remain of this evil family.

And the last of the Jews to hold out against the Roman government were in Masada. And this was a prophecy fulfilled as they chose death rather than life and committed mass suicide at Masada rather than to be taken by the Romans. And so that was the final residue of those that remained prior to the dispersion by the Roman government.

The final residue of people chose death rather than life. Moreover, shalt thou say unto them, thus saith the Lord, shall they fall and not arise? Shall they turn away and not return again? In other words, though they're going to be wiped out, the last of those that remain will choose to commit suicide rather than be taken captive. Yet God said, I will return.

I will deal with them again. Oh, the patience of God and the grace of God as he promises even though they have failed, he will be true and faithful and he will gather them again in the last days. Why then is this people of Jerusalem slid him back by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit.

They refuse to return. I hearken and heard, but they spoke not aright. No man repented him of the wickedness, saying, what have I done? Everyone turned to his course as a horse rushes to the battle.

Now the stork of the heaven knows her appointed times. And the turtle in the crane and the swallow observed the time of their coming. But the people know not the judgment of the Lord.

Even the animals have certain instinctive knowledge. But my people, God said, are refusing to obey the conscience of their own hearts. It's been planted there.

God has put his word in each man in his heart. But men refuse even those basic instincts of good and evil, right and wrong. Now the swallow returns every year to Capistrano.

He knows the days. He observes the times. They have an instinctive built-in kind of a little guidance computer system.

But here, people, infinitely wiser than the animals, yet disobeying that inner conscience that God has placed in each man. How do you say we are wise and the law of the Lord is with us? Lo, certainly in vain he gave it or he made it. The pen of the scribes is in vain.

The wise men are ashamed. They are dismayed and taken. Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord.

So what wisdom is really in them? How can you say you're wise? We've got the law of the Lord. God gave the law, he said, in vain. God sent his Son in vain.

As far as many people are concerned. If you have rejected Jesus Christ as your Savior, God sent his Son to die in vain. And the death of Jesus Christ is in vain as far as you are concerned.

It is only as you have received Jesus Christ that it becomes valid and meaningful. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly saying, peace, peace, when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they had committed abominations? Nay, they were not at all ashamed.

Neither could they blush. Therefore, they shall fall among them that fall. And in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the Lord, for I will surely consume them.

Saith the Lord, there shall be no more grapes in the vine nor figs in the fig tree. The leaf shall fade and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them. Why do we sit still? Assemble yourselves and let us enter into the defense cities and let us be silent.

For the Lord our God has put us to silence and given us water of gall to drink because we have sinned against the Lord. We looked for peace, but no good came. And for the time of health, and behold, there was trouble.

The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan. Babylonian armies moving down from the upper area of Dan. The whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of the strong ones.

For they are come. They've devoured the land and all that is in it, the city and those that dwell therein. For behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices among you, which will not be charmed, and they shall bite you, saith the Lord.

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 them that dwell in the far country. Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her king in her? Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images and with their strange vanities? The harvest is past.

The summer is ended. And we are not saved. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt.

I am black. Astonishment has taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered? So God's lament now.

And God's crying over the situation. And I think the saddest lament in the whole Bible is this in verse 20 where God declares the harvest is past. The summer is ended.

And they are not saved. Lost. Eternally lost.

The time of harvest is over. Let me warn you as a servant of God and as His spokesman that the day of harvest is almost over. The summer is almost past.

God is winding up very rapidly His program on this planet Earth. The day of salvation will soon be over. Paul said the night is far spent.

The day is at hand. That is the new day of God's kingdom. If you're not saved you don't have much more time to wait.

The harvest is almost over. God is about ready to bring things to a climax. Now how God identifies is beautiful.

For the hurt of the daughter of my people God said I am hurt. It hurts God to see these people miss out on what God wants for them. God is hurt when I am walking out of fellowship with Him and thus am losing out on all that He wants to do for me.

It hurts God to see me suffering for my own follies. For the hurt of my people God said I am hurt. Now Jeremiah declares Oh that my head were water and my eyes were as a fountain of tears that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.

Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men. You know now why he was called the weeping prophet. He wished that his head were of water and his eyes were the fountain that these tears might run continually for the tragedy of the people.

Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men that I might lead my people and go from them for they are all adulterers. They are an assembly of treacherous men and they bend their tongues like a bow for lies. That's quite a picturesque speech isn't it? Bending their tongue like a bow so they can shoot out their arrows of lies.

Hit you. But they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth for they proceed from one evil to another and they know not me saith the Lord. Take ye heed every one of his neighbor and trust ye not in any brother for every brother will utterly supplant and every neighbor will walk with slanders and they will deceive every one his neighbor and they will not speak the truth for they have taught their tongues to speak lies and weary themselves to commit iniquity.

Thy inhabitation is in the midst of deceit and through deceit they refuse to know me saith the Lord. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts behold I will melt them and try them for how shall I do for the daughter of my people? Their tongue is as an arrow that is shot out. It speaks deceit.

One speaks peaceably to his neighbor with his mouth but in his heart he's lying in wait to strike him. Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the Lord. Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing for the habitations of the wilderness, a lamentation, because they are burned up so that none can pass through them neither can men hear the voice of the cattle both the fowl of the heavens, the beast are fled, they are gone and I will make Jerusalem heaps that

is heaps of destruction, the den of dragons and I will make the cities of Judah desolate and without an inhabitant.

Who is the wise man that may understand this? Who is he to whom the mouth of the Lord hath spoken that he may declare it? For what the land perished and is burned up like a wilderness that none passeth through. And the Lord saith, because they have forsaken my law, which I set before them and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein, but they have walked after the imagination of their own heart and after Balaam, which their fathers taught them. Therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, behold, I will feed them, even this people with wormwood and give them the water of gall to drink.

I will scatter them also among the heathen whom neither they nor their fathers have known and I will send a sword after them until I have consumed them. So God pronounces his judgment, but the reasons for his judgment. They have forsaken his law, which he had set before them.

They had not obeyed his voice, neither walked they according to his commandments, but they walked everyone after his own wickedness, the imagination of his own heart. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, consider ye and call for mourning women that they may come and send for a cunning women that they may come and let them make haste and take up a wailing for us that our eyes may run down with tears and our eyelids gush out with waters. For the voice of wailing is heard out of Zion.

How are we spoiled? We are greatly confounded because we have forsaken the land because our dwellings they've cast us out. Yet hear the word of the Lord, O ye women, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth and teach your daughters wailing, everyone her neighbor lamentation. For death has come up into our windows and has entered into our palaces to cut off the children without and the young men from the streets.

Speak thus, saith the Lord, even the carcasses of men shall fall as dung upon the open field and as a handful after the harvest, none shall gather them. Thus saith the Lord, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, neither let the rich man glory in his riches. It is interesting, these are three things that people often glory in.

The wise men glory in their wisdom. The mighty man glories in his strength and the rich man glories in his riches. But God said, He that glorieth, let him glory in that he understands and knows me.

Now that's worth glorying about. How dies the wise man? Solomon said as the fool. How dies the rich man? Like the poor and even the strong are made weak through age, catabolic forces.

So these things in which men glory are all temporal things. They're all very passing. My strength is failing.

My wisdom will yield to senility. My riches will be left unto others. If I'm going to glory, I need to glory in the fact that I understand and know God because that's eternal and that has eternal value to it.

The rest may give me an advantage for a time. Wisdom may give me an advantage for a time. Strength may give me an advantage for a time.

Riches may give me an advantage for a time. But understanding and knowing God will give me an advantage for eternity. That's something to really glory in.

That I know God. That he understands the ways of God. That I am the Lord which exercises loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth.

For in these things I delight, saith the Lord. What does he delight in? Let's look again. Loving kindness, true judgment, fairness actually is what it's about, righteousness.

That's what God wants you to do. That's how God wants you to live. Loving one another.

Kind to one another. Be kind one to another. Tender hearted.

Forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us. God wants you to be fair in your dealings. Just.

God wants you to be righteous. Do the right thing. And in that he is pleased.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will punish all of them which are circumcised with the uncircumcision. In other words, this ritual of circumcision is not going to do a thing for you. You're going to be punished just as those who are uncircumcised.

Ritual is of no avail if it isn't a reality. The physical ritual is meaningless unless there is a corresponding work within a person's heart. Baptism is totally meaningless unless there is a corresponding work of the Spirit within your heart.

They can hold you down until you drown. It's not going to save you. They can baptize you frontwards, forwards or any formula that they might seek to use.

It's not going to save you unless there is a corresponding work of God's Spirit within your heart. And that death to the old man, the old nature and the burying of the old man and the newness of life in Christ Jesus as we live and walk after the Spirit. That's what counts.

Not the ritual. Now, these people were counting in the fact that they've gone through the ritual of circumcision which marked them as God's special people and the whole idea of circumcision was cutting off the flesh which was a symbol of no longer living after the flesh but living after the Spirit. But here they've gone through the ritual of circumcision but were still living after the flesh.

Thus, the ritual was totally meaningless as long as they lived after the flesh. It is only meaningful if a man lives after the Spirit. So Paul the Apostle reasons, if my living after the flesh can negate my experience of circumcision, then my living after the Spirit will make unnecessary the rite of circumcision in that God counts the heart of the man.

Now, your lifestyle can negate your water baptism. Water baptism can't save you. And your lifestyle can totally negate any kind of baptismal experience you've ever had because the whole idea is there in baptism.

It is death to the self and living after the Spirit, the new man after Christ. And baptism is to the church what circumcision was to the Jew in that a symbol of no longer living after the flesh, now living after the Spirit. But if your life is lived after the flesh, it can negate any meaning to your baptism in the same token.

If you're living and walking after the Spirit, that would be accounted as baptism. Though I believe that a person should be baptized, I do not believe in baptismal regeneration and I don't believe that a person is

lost who lives after the Spirit who has not had an opportunity to be baptized. So the days are going to come when I'll punish all of them which are circumcised along with the uncircumcised.

Egypt, Judah, Edom, the children of Ammon, Moab, and all that are in the utmost corners that dwell in the wilderness. For all of the nations are uncircumcised and the house of Israel as they were uncircumcised for they are uncircumcised in the heart. It's only in the flesh, it's only an outward ritual, but it isn't in the heart where it really counts.

Hear the word of the Lord, that the Lord speaks unto you, O house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen. Be not dismayed at the signs of heaven or the zodiac.

For the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain. For one cuts a tree out of the forest, the work of hands of the workman with an axe.

They deck it with silver and with gold, with strings of light and baubles. No, it doesn't say that. I'm seeing things here.

They fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. Now, there are some who believe that this is a reference to the ancient custom of taking the fir trees and decorating them with gold and silver streamers on the 25th of December in worshipping the god Tammuz, the Babylonian god, whose birthday was worshiped on the 25th of December at the winter solstice. And some believe that this refers to that ancient custom that antedates Christ by a couple thousand years.

There are others who say, No, it's just a reference to an idol. Taking a tree and cutting out of the forest, carving the thing out and then decking your little idol with all of these golden ornaments. Let me say that it's strictly the opinion of man and you can't prove either.

It is true that the custom of decorating fir trees antedates Christianity by several thousand years. That is decorating them on the 25th of December in the time of the winter solstice as they worship Tammuz, the son of the Queen of Heaven, Semiramis. And if you want to get into that deeper, I would recommend that you get the book *The Two Babylons* by Hislop, H-I-S-L-O-P.

And he gives quite a thorough historical documentation on the origin of what we call Christmas trees. It will cause you to wonder. They are upright as the palm trees, but they speak not.

They must be carried because they cannot go on their own momentum. Don't be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, but neither is it in them to do good. For as much as there is none like unto thee, O Lord, thou art great and thy name is great in might.

Who would not fear thee, O King of Nations? For to thee doth it appertain, for as much as among all the wise men of the nations and all the kingdoms, there is none that is like unto thee. But they are altogether broodish and foolish. The stock or the little idol that has been made is a doctrine of vanities.

Silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish and gold from Euphaz. And the work of the workmen in the hands of the founder. Blue and purple is their clothing.

They are the work of cunning men. These little gods of silver and gods of gold that they've carved out. Artists have carved them out and then they put blue and purple gowns upon it.

But the Lord or Jehovah is the true God. He is the living God and an everlasting King. At his wrath, the earth shall tremble and the nation shall not be able to abide his indignation.

Thus shall ye say unto them, the gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens. But he hath made the earth by his power. He hath established the world by his wisdom.

He has stretched out the heavens by his discretion. So he is talking to the people concerning these gods that they had made themselves. The vast difference.

There is a God who has made man and then there are men who make their gods. Gods who are made by men. A God who carries men and a God who must be carried by men.

And the prophet finds it rather ridiculous that they have to carry their gods around. They haven't any power to get anywhere themselves. And yet they're worshiping something they've got to carry around.

They don't even have enough gumption or ability to get where it needs to go on its own. The true God, when he utters his voice, there's a multitude of water in the heavens and he causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth. He makes the lightnings with the rain and brings forth the wind out of his treasures.

Every man is brutish in his knowledge. Man, poor man, so ignorant in that which he knows best. Every man is brutish in his knowledge.

Every founder is confounded by the graven image. For his molten image is falsehood. There's no breath in them.

They are vanity. They are the work of errors. In the time of their visitation, they shall perish.

The portion of Jacob is not like them for he is the former of all things. Rather than being formed, God is the one who has formed all things. Israel is the rod of his inheritance.

And the Lord of hosts, or Jehovah of hosts, is his name. Gather up the wares out of the land, O inhabitant of the fortress. For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at this once and will distress them that they may find it so.

Woe is me for my hurt. My wound is grievous, but I said truly this is a grief and I must bear it. My tabernacle is spoiled and all of my cords are broken.

My children are gone forth from me and they are not. There is none to stretch forth my tent anymore and to set up my curtains. For the pastors are become brutish and have not sought the Lord.

Therefore, they shall not prosper and their flocks shall be scattered. Behold the noise of the Bruit, or the rumor is come. And a great commotion out of the north country to make the cities of Judah desolate and the den of dragons.

O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself. It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. O Lord, correct me.

It's an interesting prayer of the prophet. God, I know that I don't have enough sense to know what is the right way to go. So you correct me, God.

You guide me. I know that the ways of man are not in a man. A man hasn't the ability to direct his own steps.

Now the wise man in recognizing his own limitations is the man who will commit his life over to God. God, you correct me. You direct my steps, O Lord.

But not in your anger, lest I become nothing. Pour out your fury upon the heathen that know they not and upon the families that call not on thy name. For they have eaten up Jacob and devoured him and consumed him and have made his habitation desolate.

God has some heavy things. I think the heaviest of all is the cry, the harvest is ended. The summer is over.

We're not saved. I hope that none of you ever make that cry. The Bible says, Behold, today is the day of salvation.

Call upon the Lord while he is near. Lest those evil times come when you say, I have no pleasure in them. For God's Spirit will not always strive with man.

If you continue to reject God's grace and love that he is offering to you through Jesus Christ, the day will come when God will say, Let them alone. Don't pray anymore for them. Don't intercede.

Don't intercede. I won't listen if you do. And the harvest will be over and the summer ended and you will be eternally lost.

May that not be the case. May also you not be fooling yourselves in thinking that you can live after your flesh and that the grace of God will just somehow compensate and cover it. God said, Tear your heart, not your garments.

He doesn't want an outward display. He wants an inward work in your heart and in your life of commitment to Him. If you feel like you need to settle some things with God tonight, I would encourage you to go back to the prayer room and the pastors will be back there to pray with you.

For God wants you to experience His rest, which He promised, and that you can have as you surrender your life to Him. Now may the Lord be with you. May He watch over you.

May He keep you in His love as He strengthens you by His Holy Spirit and as He guides you into His path of righteousness. May the Lord keep you. In Jesus' name.

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