

**Jeremiah 27: 1-22; “Jeremiah Wearing Christ’s Yoke”, Sermon # 29 in the series –  
“Heart Lessons Learned for a Prophet and the People of God”, Delivered  
by Pastor Paul Rendall on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017,  
in the Morning Worship Service.**

We are given here in this chapter, a picture of Jeremiah’s acting out the bondage that Judah and Jerusalem, and the nations all around them, would come into, as a result of Nebuchadnezzar’s military conquests of their nations. Jeremiah had prophesied that Nebuchadnezzar would bring them into this forced service, and that he would impose upon them a 70 years captivity (Jeremiah 25: 11), where many of them would be carried away to Babylon to serve him there. Others, because they were submissive and not rebellious to the Lord’s preceptive and providential will, would not be carried away. But God’s purpose for His dear people who would obey His commands and would submit to His providential ordering, was that they might learn how to be content to learn a principled obedience of faith in Him; an obedience in which they would glorify Him, even in difficult circumstances.

The visible symbol of all of these great truths was Jeremiah’s being commanded by God to make for himself bonds and yokes and put them on his neck. Jeremiah was told to put a multi-pieced yoke on his neck, for the word in the Hebrew is plural. It is the word – צוּרִי (muth) which means a traverse piece of wood to which he attached some other smaller cross-pieces of wood; and this was then laid on his neck, like the yoke which is laid upon an ox. He then he tied this crossbar with bands to himself so that it would be held in place. This wearing of this yoke was to be a sign to Zedekiah, king of Judah, and all the nations that he was in league with, a symbolic indication that it would be a vain thing to try to defend themselves against the king of Babylon’s onslaughts. They would be overcome by his forces, and be brought into a forced servitude to Nebuchadnezzar. And so, here we find Jeremiah declaring God’s word to them – that they should not fight this servitude. For it was God’s will that it be this way for them; that they would serve this foreign king.

I would like to apply this to all of us here this morning, in the following way: Our God is wise and holy in all of His providential ordering of events in the lives of individuals and nations. Those who will take up Christ’s yoke, will be willing to take up their cross and follow Him. This is the spiritual application to us: Jeremiah’s taking up and wearing this yoke, as a prophet in Old Testament times, is a picture of our taking up the yoke of Christ in New Testament times. A Christian who wants to be faithful to God and learn the way of walking with Christ in righteousness, will be willing like Jeremiah, to take their stand for the truth. The truth that Jeremiah was taking his stand for was that all of God’s purposes would be fulfilled. We should be willing take our stand for this same truth also, and we should do our best to submit God’s purpose as His providence reveals his decretive will; the will of His decrees. A person who has Christ’s grace will not fight taking up Christ’s yoke and learning from Him. What He would have you to learn, is how to submit to God. You and I, in order to be faithful disciples of our Lord, must remember that good saying of His which is found in Matthew 11: 29 – “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and My burden is light.

So having stated the proposition, let me give you the main points. 1<sup>st</sup> – If you would take up Christ’s yoke and learn from Him in difficult circumstances you must believe that the whole earth in God’s hands. (verses 2-8) 2<sup>nd</sup> – If you would take up Christ’s yoke and learn from Him in difficult circumstances, you must remember that your spiritual and material prosperity are in His hands. (verses 9-15) And 3<sup>rd</sup> – If you would take up Christ’s yoke and learn from Him in difficult circumstances, you must remember that your times are in His hands. (verses 16-22)

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – If you would take up Christ’s yoke and learn from Him in difficult circumstances, you must believe the whole world is in God’s hands.** (verses 2-8)

Verse 2 says – “Thus says the Lord to me: ‘Make for yourselves bonds and yokes, and put them on your neck, and send them to the king of Moab, the king of the Ammonites, the king of Tyre, and the king of Sidon, by the hand of the messengers who come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah king of Judah.’” “And command them to say to their masters, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel – Thus shall you say to your masters: ‘I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are on the ground, by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and have given it to whom it seemed proper to Me.’” “And now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant; and the beasts of the field I have also given him to serve him.” “So all nations shall serve him and his son and his son’s sons, until the time of his land comes; and then many nations and great kings shall make him serve them.” “And it shall be, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and which will not put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation I will punish,’ says the Lord, ‘with the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand.”

Now, this seems like a very crazy thing to have to do; to make a yoke for yourself and not only make the yoke, but then you have to go out into public with it on. Not only this, but God has told you that you also have to make yokes for the messengers, the ambassadors, of the 5 nations which are specified here; the surrounding nations who were confederate with Judah against Babylon. You, the prophet, have to give them each a yoke and send them back to their masters, the 5 kings of these countries, giving these messengers a message to take with them. It is a message of God’s sovereignty control over them. And everything involved in the life and well-being of that nation is at stake. Well, it may sound crazy, but this was Jeremiah’s ministry to these men, and to their masters. God knew that it would be a very effective witness for Himself to all of these nations. It was a witness to the sovereignty of the only true and living God. What was the message that went along with the yoke? Verse 5 – I, the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, have made the earth. I have made man and beast. By my great power and by My outstretched arm, I give the earth to whom it seems proper to Me. Now that is a declaration of sovereignty. God is saying that He gives each king the authority to rule their nation, and He can take it away or give it to a tyrant like Nebuchadnezzar if He wishes. In this case, this is what He had determined that He would do. He had given all these lands to Nebuchadnezzar.

If you were to do a study, you would find that the word “sovereignty” is not found in the Bible. But surely the concept of God’s absolute rule and control over the whole earth, over all the nations of the earth, and all the people on the earth, is here magnified. Indeed it is magnified in many places of the Bible, if we will receive it. Therefore, it is not only not wrong to believe in God’s sovereignty, it is important that every Christian will believe in God’s sovereignty if they want to grow up into Christ. Now, how does this relate to us practically? It relates to us practically in this way. God is sovereign over every nation in the world today, and whatever trouble comes to our nation is something that God has not only permitted, He has ordained it. The reason that God has ordained trouble and calamity for any nation is usually because of their sins. “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” (Proverbs 14: 24) It is true that in an unrighteous nation, there may be many Christians who are trying to do God’s will, from a good heart. And they may be affected adversely by the unrighteous attitudes and actions of people around them, and sometimes, even unrighteous policies or practices of people in church or government. What is to be done?

You must take up Christ’s yoke and learn from Him in the midst of whatever difficulties that you come into. The Lord had Jeremiah do what would seem to most people, a very crazy thing. He would have him to wear a yoke, and speak a message which many people did not want to

hear. But he could do it, because he believed in God and His sovereignty. He believed in the truth that He preached. God made the earth, and He is sovereign over it. Think about what the earth would be like if God was not sovereign; if He did not uphold His creation moment by moment. What would it be like if evolution was true? The world would disintegrate in very short order. But in Christ, all things consist; they hold together. He upholds all things by the word of His power. O how we ought to praise and thank God that it is so! Who is it who brings the high winds of the hurricanes that destroy so much, but afterwards brings a calm? It is God; that's who. Who is it who permits wild fires to rage, seemingly out of control, and then allows men to fight the fires and bring them under control? God does, that's who. Who is it who ordained that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon would be able to have the military might to gain control over all these countries that are mentioned in our text? God did; that's who.

Who was it who ordained that after 70 years of captivity that Judah and Israel would be brought back, and Babylon would have to serve the nations that she had once ruled over? God did; that's who. I would like to declare to you today that if God were not the sovereign ruler over all the creation and the whole world, then nothing of good order would exist anywhere. And the reason that God brings cataclysmic judgments of natural disasters, and wars where evil men threaten to take over the world, is to show His own dear people that they need to listen to His word to do it, and trust in Him that He is working all things together for their good; that is, to all those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. There ought to be nothing that we glory in more, as God's people, than His sovereignty, for it was by His sovereign will that He determined to have a people, from before time began. It was His sovereign choice that in the fullness of time, He would send His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that He might redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. (Galatians 4: 4)

Without God exercising His sovereignty, His righteous rule over men's hearts and lives, there would be no salvation for sinners, and no way for men to curb their own sinful lusts and desires or other men's attempts to take advantage of them, and even kill them. But God is sovereign and His eyes are in every place keeping watch over the evil and the good. (Proverbs 15: 3) "The Lord has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all." (Psalm 103: 19) You may remember that there came a point in the life of king Nebuchadnezzar, the very man who God gave all these kingdoms to, where he was showing forth the fact to all the watchers in the heavenly realms that he was a very proud man. He even was given a prophetic dream and visions in his head to help him to understand his sinful problem. But he did not listen to the interpretation of it, given to him by Daniel, and he did not take Daniel's counsel to him to heart, that he should break off his sins by being righteous, and his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; that perhaps there would be a lengthening of his prosperity.

Instead, a year later he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon, and he was saying to himself – "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty, a great thing? And while the word was still the king's mouth, it says, a voice fell from heaven: "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you!" "And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field." "They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and he gives it to whomever He chooses. That very hour, it says, the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws." Now, that is God's sovereignty.

How very thankful Nebuchadnezzar was, when after these seven periods of time, God gave him a sane mind once again. And it says, "At the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my

eyes to heaven, and my understanding return to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion (His sovereign rule) is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation.” “All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.” “No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, ‘What have You done.’” Now the way that you and I ought to look at the various difficulties and calamities that come to us, is to believe in our hearts and minds that God has ordained them all for our good, if we are a saved person, and trusting in the Lord, and repenting of all of our sins. But sometimes we do not see areas of sin in our lives, or areas of obedience that we are either ignoring or neglecting, or not doing so well at. But you should know that because God is sovereign, He knows how to deal with you, and He will deal with you according to His love for you in Christ. He has perfect insight into your heart’s condition. Just like Nebuchadnezzar, He is able to humble those who walk in pride. He is able to abase them if it is according to His will.

And you can sure that He will test you in regard to these areas of disobedience or obedience in your life, so that you will come to a better understanding of what it will mean for you to be a humble, and holy, and obedient servant, of such a loving Heavenly Father. The question is – Will you take up Christ’s yoke and submit to God’s purpose for your life? Will you begin to think about the sinful state of our nation and realize that God could at any time give us into the hands of some tyrant like Nebuchadnezzar if He so willed that it would be so. Let it not be that you would be so proud that you will go your own way, not heeding the warning signs of pride or disobedience or self-sufficiency. You may find yourself wondering greatly at what it is that the Lord is doing with you, when you find yourself in some sort of bondage to your own sins or your own false way of thinking. But if you will take up the yoke of Christ and learn from Him, then He will be faithful to teach you what you need to learn and what you need to do. Begin by immersing yourself in His word, and praying that He would lead and guide you by His Spirit into all the truth of His word, and give you wisdom into whatever situation is vexing you or perplexing you.

**Now, 2<sup>nd</sup> - If you would take up Christ’s yoke and learn from Him in difficult circumstances, you must believe that your spiritual and material prosperity are in His hands.** (verses 9-15)

“Therefore do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your soothsayers, or your sorcerers, who speak to you, saying, ‘You shall not serve the king of Babylon.’” “For they prophesy a lie to you, to remove you far from your land; and I will drive you out, and you will perish.” “But the nations that bring their necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, I will let them remain in their own land,’ says the LORD, ‘and they shall till it and dwell in it.” “I also spoke to Zedekiah king of Judah according to all these words, saying, ‘Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live!’” “Why will you die, you and your people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the LORD has spoken against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon?” “Therefore do not listen to the words of the prophets who speak to you, saying, ‘You shall not serve the king of Babylon,’ for they prophesy a lie to you.”

The worst thing about false prophets and deceived political leaders is their failure to realize that they are deceived concerning their ability to see that God is the ruler over all things, and that He has defined for us what truth is, and what will make for real political stability and blessing upon a nation and a people. Neither the false prophet nor the proud, independent, and self-sufficient political ruler can see the value of submitting to God, unless they come to see the light of the glorious gospel of Christ and are saved. They do not see that they have much to learn. They want to define for themselves what the truth is, and what they believe will make the nation prosperous and great again. They do not realize that only God can make a nation

prosperous and great in a good and holy sense. It comes from many people obeying His word. Only God can deliver us from our enemies and from all evil. Only He can keep your soul. Only God can deliver people from their self-deceptions and delusions concerning what makes for a God-glorifying life and a truly great nation. The false prophets were prophesying a lie to the people, saying that they would not have to serve the king of Babylon, but it was actually God's purpose that the nation receive His discipline of them and submit to Nebuchadnezzar's rule. What was it that brought some of the people of Judah to this point, where they came to believe that it was better to surrender to Nebuchadnezzar, continue in their own land, and pay a tax or tribute to the king, rather than fight against him with their allies in the surrounding lands? They remembered God and His word.

Turn with me over to Deuteronomy chapter 8, verse 1. Here we find the Lord's teaching on this subject that we are studying. "Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers." "And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not." "So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word which proceeds from the mouth of the Lord." "Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years." "So you should know in your heart that as a man chastens His son, so the Lord your God chastens you." "Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him."

"For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper." "When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you." "Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, lest – when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the rock of flint; who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end – then you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.'" "And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day." This sounds quite a bit like it could be addressed to Christians in the United States of America, does it not?

The children of Judah and Jerusalem and all Israel did not remember the Lord their God during these years of Jeremiah's prophesying to them. They thought their own thoughts, they thought that their own power and the might of their own hand had gained them whatever wealth that they had, and they forgot that it was God who had given them the power to get wealth. Their hearts were lifted up, and they forgot that it was God who had delivered the nation from the bondage of Egypt, and led the nation through the terrible wilderness, and provided for all of their needs. He took them through all of these terrible and amazing and wonderful experiences, so that He might humble them and test them to see whether they would keep His

commandments or not. This is the same that God does with us. Every good thing and perfect gift comes down from the Father of lights, and God will look to see if we recognize that, and are thankful for all that He has given to us, and done for us, and whether we will come to terms with the many issues of obedience to His word; whether we will keep His word and commandments and trust in Him that He will show us the specifics of how that will be worked out in our lives.

**And 3<sup>rd</sup> – If you would take up Christ’s yoke and learn from Him in difficult circumstances, you must remember that your times are in His hands.** (verses 16-22)

“Also I spoke to the priests and to all this people, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: ‘Do not listen to the words of your prophets who prophesy to you, saying, ‘Behold, the vessels of the LORD’s house will now shortly be brought back from Babylon’; for they prophesy a lie to you.’ “Do not listen to them; serve the king of Babylon, and live!” “Why should this city be laid waste?” “But if they are prophets, and if the word of the LORD is with them, let them now make intercession to the LORD of hosts, that the vessels which are left in the house of the LORD, in the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem, do not go to Babylon.” “For thus says the LORD of hosts concerning the pillars, concerning the Sea, concerning the carts, and concerning the remainder of the vessels that remain in this city, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon did not take, when he carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, from Jerusalem to Babylon, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem – thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that remain in the house of the LORD, and in the house of the king of Judah and of Jerusalem: ‘They shall be carried to Babylon, and there they shall be until the day that I visit them,’ says the LORD. ‘Then I will bring them up and restore them to this place.’”

I am sure that it was hard for Jeremiah to have to give these words to the people, but he did it because he wanted to be faithful to God and God’s word. It was a part of His taking up Christ’s yoke and wearing it. He had to tell them that the nation would be in this servitude to Nebuchadnezzar and in captivity for a much longer time than they would have wanted it to be, and that there were many false prophets telling them lies about the future prosperity of the nation. Jeremiah told them not to believe them. He had to tell them that the vessels of the Lord’s house, the ones that were taken, were not going to be coming back any time soon, and actually that the ones that remained in the city, were going to be carried away in the near future. But Jeremiah also told the people something else which you and I should remember as well. That is, that someday, after this 70 years captivity was over, God would visit them, and He would bring all the vessels of the temple worship back and restore them to the people who would be alive at that day, the people who would see with their own eyes the 2<sup>nd</sup> temple.

I would apply it this way to you; that your times are in God’s hands. Even as the whole world is in His hands, even as all of your spiritual and material prosperity is in His hands, so His visiting your soul to restore it from any spiritual bondage and captivity you may have come into, is also in His hands. Be content to have it this way. He is the One who makes you to lie down in green pastures, and leads you beside the still waters, and He is the One who restores your soul. O how I hope and pray that each one of us will be willing to learn to be content in whatever circumstances we find ourselves; whether we abound or whether we are abased. May we be able to truly affirm the words of Psalm 31: 14 – “But as for me, I trust in You, O Lord; I say, ‘You are my God.’” “My times are in Your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me.” “Make Your face shine upon Your servant; save me for Your mercies’ sake.” “Do not let me be ashamed, O Lord, for I have called upon You; let the wicked be ashamed; let them be silent in the grave.” “Let the lying lips be put to silence, which speak insolent things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.” “Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You, which You have prepared for those who trust in You.”

