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## ***Called to Speak for the Lord – the Book of Jeremiah***

More Wisdom for Living in a Wicked Nation and World

***January 17, 2021***

**Sermon Text:** Jeremiah 12:14 – 15:21

**Scripture Reading:** Jeremiah 14

There are people in this world – and there always have been – who are beyond redemption. People whom the Lord has given over to judgment. People who *knowingly, willfully, and repeatedly* have spurned Christ in spite of many, many patient and kind invitations to turn from evil and believe the gospel.

Romans 1:28 ESV And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done....Romans 1:32 ESV Though they know God's righteous decree that those who

practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

Such people are primarily found *in the sphere of Christianity*. In churches. They are people who have Bibles, who often quote scripture verses, and yet they walk in wickedness and in reality despise the Lord.

This was the condition of the nation of Judah in Jeremiah's day. It was something that Jeremiah, grieving over the sin of his nation and the destruction which was even then in his lifetime starting to come about, had to come to grips with. We saw this last time when the Lord admonished him for simplistic thinking, showing Jeremiah that the Lord's plans were far greater than the short term "fix" Jeremiah had in mind.

Because here was the reality:

Jeremiah 12:7-8 ESV "I have forsaken my house; I have abandoned my heritage; I have given the beloved of my soul into the hands of her enemies. (8) My heritage has become

to me like a lion in the forest; she has lifted up her voice against me; therefore I hate her.

There it was. The people of Judah, God's covenant people, hated Him, and He now hated them. He had withdrawn from them and decreed that they would be destroyed by enemies. Jeremiah is told numbers of times not to pray for them because the Lord's purpose of judgment was pronounced and as good as done.

We have already seen, and we will continue to see, that God's wrath was particularly set upon *the false shepherds of Judah*.

**Jeremiah 12:10-11 ESV** Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard; they have trampled down my portion; they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. (11) They have made it a desolation; desolate, it mourns to me. The whole land is made desolate, but no man lays it to heart.

The judgment which was already on its way was largely put upon the *pastors*. The shepherds. The prophets. The priests. With their false words they had effected judgment. They had

encouraged the wicked to continue in their sin, preaching a message that promised peace, security, and the Lord's blessing – no matter what.

As it was then, so it is today in our nation. Peace, security, forgiveness, blessing, no matter what. God bless America, no matter what. Well, it didn't happen in Jeremiah's day and it will not happen in our day apart from a genuine humbling and repentance – a turning from our wicked ways. *And as it was in Jeremiah's day, a wicked nation should tremble in fear that at any moment the Lord could decree that the line has been crossed.* At an individual level, every person who is despising the Lord's call to turn from their wicked way and believe in Christ, should tremble at that same, sobering truth. Sin, pursued long enough, the road that leads to hell traveled upon long enough, reaches a point of no return.

**Hebrews 4:1-3 ESV** Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. (2) For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. (3) For we who have believed

enter that rest, as he has said, “As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest,’” although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.

listen, then I will utterly pluck it up and destroy it, declares the LORD.”

### The Gospel is Offered to the Nations

Here in 12:14-17, we have one of the many Old Testament promises to the Gentiles that the Lord’s salvation is for people of *any nation* who learn of Him and repent of their evil:

Jeremiah 12:14-17 ESV Thus says the LORD concerning all my evil neighbors who touch the heritage that I have given my people Israel to inherit: “Behold, I will pluck them up from their land, and I will pluck up the house of Judah from among them. (15) And after I have plucked them up, I will again have compassion on them, and I will bring them again each to his heritage and each to his land.

(16) And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, ‘As the LORD lives,’ even as they taught my people to swear by Baal, then they shall be built up in the midst of my people. (17) But if any nation will not

The pronouns here are a bit confusing, but in vss 14-15 the “them” is Judah (and most probably some of Israel as well?). The Lord is addressing the enemy, neighboring nations of Judah and announcing His purposes to them. He is bringing judgment upon them for their sin, but it is not a total destruction. The day will come when He once again has compassion on them and brings them back to their land.

Then, at vs 16, the “they” becomes those neighboring, enemy nations. They must understand that they must repent of their idols and their evil, they must learn the ways of the Lord and obey Him, and if they do, they will be blessed as part of God’s people.

But...if they refuse, that nation will be destroyed without remedy.

### The Ruined Waistband

Chapter 13 is about the Lord’s instruction to Jeremiah to buy a linen garment, and put it around his waist. After some time, the Lord then told him to travel over to the Euphrates River (a long trip?) and bury it there. He did so

and then, “after many days” the Lord told him to go back there and get it. He did and he found the garment ruined.

What was the object lesson here? It was a picture of the Lord’s faithful love and devotion to Judah and of the consequences of their willful, continual spurning of Him...and the resulting judgment that would come. Why the Euphrates? Probably because that is the region the enemy would come from, and perhaps because Judah had at times looked to these other nations for rescue from enemies, instead of trusting the Lord.

### The Lord’s Word to False Church Members

Verses 12-14 show us even more about the attitude of these wicked people – Jeremiah’s countrymen. It also reflects what kind of message they were hearing from the prophets and priests:

Jeremiah 13:12-14 ESV “You shall speak to them this word: ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, “Every jar shall be filled with wine.”’ And they will say to you, ‘Do we not indeed know that every jar will be filled with wine?’ (13) Then you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD: Behold, I

will fill with drunkenness all the inhabitants of this land: the kings who sit on David’s throne, the priests, the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. (14) And I will dash them one against another, fathers and sons together, declares the LORD. I will not pity or spare or have compassion, that I should not destroy them.’”

Jeremiah gives the people what sounded to them like the sermons they had been hearing for so long. *Every jar shall be filled with wine.* [This may be a background to Jesus’ miracle of the water to wine at Cana in John 2?]. And look at their response:

“*Do we not indeed know that....?*”

In other words, they were convinced and they had been taught all along that God was going to bless, bless, bless their nation no matter what. That was the message that filled their pulpits. It is the same message we hear from so many pulpits today. *No matter what, God will forgive us. God is going to just keep right on filling our jars with wine. Peace. Prosperity. Wealth and health. Because after all, God is love.*”

But then Jeremiah brings it home ‘*I will fill with drunkenness all the inhabitants*

*of the land.*" (Note again the inclusion of the priests and prophets and rulers in particular). And this drunkenness is not from good wine – it is a staggering and falling due to the wrath of the Lord being poured out upon them, the complete destruction of their country and the slaughter and captivity of the people.

The Bible often uses this image of a cup filled with wine as a picture of God's wrath. You see it of course in Gethsemane –

Matthew 26:39 ESV And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

[By the way, in light of this, is it not interesting that we drink a cup at the Lord's table? *But because Christ drank the cup of the Father's wrath, the cup we drink is called "a cup of blessing."* Remember that each time you come to the communion table].

Judah's jars will be filled with wine alright. They will indeed be drunk – but it will be the wine of God's wrath and their drunkenness will be a staggering

at that judgment.

Jeremiah 25:15-16 ESV Thus the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: "Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. (16) They shall drink and stagger and be crazed because of the sword that I am sending among them."

In the first part of chapter 14, we learn that the Lord had brought a terrible drought upon Judah. This should have been a "no-brainer" message to them because part of what you might call the ABC's of the Old Covenant were this:

Deuteronomy 11:11-17 ESV But the land that you are going over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water by the rain from heaven, (12) a land that the LORD your God cares for. The eyes of the LORD your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. (13) "And if you will indeed obey my commandments that I command you today, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, (14) he will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the

later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil. (15) And he will give grass in your fields for your livestock, and you shall eat and be full. (16) Take care lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them; (17) then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and he will shut up the heavens, so that there will be no rain, and the land will yield no fruit, and you will perish quickly off the good land that the LORD is giving you.

But here we see once again the incredible hardness of their hearts – of the sinner’s heart. This was a nationwide call to repentance that no one could possibly miss and yet you find this as their response numbers of times in this book –

Jeremiah 16:10-11 ESV “And when you tell this people all these words, and they say to you, ‘Why has the LORD pronounced all this great evil against us? What is our iniquity? What is the sin that we have committed against the LORD our God?’ (11) then you shall say to them: ‘Because your fathers have forsaken me, declares the LORD, and have gone after other gods and have

served and worshiped them, and have forsaken me and have not kept my law,

Isn’t this true in our nation today and in the lives of most people here? *Why have you done this to us?* No one wants to connect the dots. We had the unprecedented events of 9-11, and even then the nation did not repent. In fact when we (and we did so by putting sermon in the local paper) even imply that God had anything at all to do with it, what was the typical response. “You are a bunch of fools. How dare you imply that God would ever do such a thing or even could do such a thing!”

There was no national repentance and there still isn’t. Hearts are just as evil and hard as in Jeremiah’s day. When the Lord brings judgments and warnings, the response is what, even if anyone does think that well, maybe God allowed it to happen – *Why has the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us? What is our iniquity? What is the sin that we have committed against the Lord our God?* And this all asked by people who had idols in every house, who were rank hypocrites at the temple, who hated God’s true prophets and His Word.

I want us all to think about something very seriously in response to this and by way of application. On a personal level. Here it is:

*One of the most telltale marks of a wicked, evil heart is that such a person is never to blame. Never at fault. It is always someone else's fault – or even God's fault.*

[Avoid such people. Do not have a relationship with them].

But I would like everyone to look at themselves. Is anyone listening to this message such a person? Are you experiencing the consequences of your own sin, but refusing to accept blame and instead habitually blaming others? If you fit that description, you are in serious, serious trouble. You are on the broadway that leads to destruction.

You can talk to people all around us today whose lives are an absolute mess. [And I am not talking about people suffering because of the sin of wicked people against them]. I am talking about people, for instance, whose marriages and families are a mess, and the reason they are is because of their own evil sin against their spouse and children. *But they will not admit it. They*

*always, always, always blame the victim or other people, or even God.*

Go talk to people who live on the streets, who have no home, no job, or to people who are in prison. I realize that there can be some people without a home or job through no fault of their own, and perhaps even due to the sin of others against them. But I can tell you that if you talk to such people (and I have done it many times), *it is never their fault. They are master blamers and buck passers. They were set up. Someone pushed their buttons. The bank was hard-nosed just because they were a year behind in their house payments and that wasn't their fault because their employer fired them for no reason at all.*

Jeremiah 2:35 ESV you say, ‘I am innocent; surely his anger has turned from me.’ Behold, I will bring you to judgment for saying, ‘I have not sinned.’

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1 John 1:8-10 ESV If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (9) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us

our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (10) If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Proverbs 28:13 ESV Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

Now hear this! Let me emphasize this again. If you are a person who refuses to take correction, if things are always someone else's fault, if you are one of these people who *conceals his transgressions* and blames others, then you are on the road to hell. You are on the very same road that these people of Judah were on and there comes a point, as it did with them, that the Lord says "that's it. Line crossed." And the day of salvation for you is over.

I remember one evening sitting in Verla's parents' house after her father had died. Her older sister was there and her life was an evil mess. Alcohol, drugs, a totally rebellious heart, a love for evil and criminals and drug dealers and perversions, and I caught her on the phone calling some of her wicked friends to come over. I told her to hang up and I told her that first thing in the

morning, she was out of there. I stayed up all night to be sure she didn't set fire to the place and the next morning we hauled her out of there.

But that evening, she looked at me with incredibly wicked eyes and said "who are you to tell me what to do!" I told her that Verla was the executor of the estate and as such we were in charge of the property. And then I told her, "you are going to hell." I didn't tell her how much God loved her and how He had a wonderful plan for her life. Because I knew she had wickedly spurned Him and His blessings for her entire life. She scoffed and said "I don't hate God. I love God." I said, "no you don't. And He doesn't love you. You are going to hell."

And she is there today. She left this world with no repentance and in fact only squandered her inheritance to finance more criminal operations.

She was never to blame. God would always fill her jar with wine. She is staggering from that wine of His wrath right now and will be forever.

Are you such a person? Are you never to blame? Does everyone else owe you? Is every trouble you experience

someone else's fault? If so...you should tremble. But the fact is, that people like this don't tremble. They have no shame. They do not know how to blush.

### Avoid Such a Person

And let me caution all of us once more – avoid such people. Don't be one, but also watch out for this warning flag – danger. It can really sneak up on you so you must be deliberate in watching for it in people. When you realize that *it is always your fault in a particular relationship*, then think long and hard about where that idea is coming from. Because think about it – is it really true that things are *always your fault*? Of course not. And if you start thinking they are, then you need to start thinking about where these thoughts are coming from.