

## “We Are Not Saved” (Jeremiah 8:18–9:3)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (2/9/2020)

### Introduction

1. The text before us is a lamentation of Jeremiah over the judgment coming to his beloved people.
  - a. The threat of this judgment was largely ignored by the people, which caused him great personal pain.
  - b. This pain was intensified by the personal threats to his own life because the people rejected God’s Word, preferring the false assurance of the majority religious opinion of the day.
2. A familiar text is found here used in many sermons: *“The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.”*
  - a. The words are used now to warn against one’s neglect of salvation, but in the text they expressed the bewildering awareness of the people in their future captivity.
  - b. With confidence they came and stood before the Lord in His house, proclaiming, *“We are delivered!”—only to go on doing all these abominations*” (7:10). Their previous confidence was dashed.
3. Knowing the consequences of their folly, the heart of Jeremiah was broken for them: *“My joy is gone; grief is upon me; my heart is sick within me”* (8:18).
  - a. Another familiar text expressed his desire for a remedy: *“Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of the daughter of my people not been restored?”* (8:22).
  - b. We respond with a resounding “YES”—His name is Jesus, the Great Physician *“who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases”* (Psalm 103:3).

### I. The Lament

1. The burden of the truth (v. 18)
  - a. The realization of Judah’s end and failure of the people to comprehend the reason caused Jeremiah’s grief. (Recall 4:19: *“My soul, my soul! I am in anguish! Oh, my heart! My heart is pounding in me; I cannot be silent.”*)
  - b. The truth is as God previously expressed, *“For my people are foolish, they know me not; they are stupid children; they have no understanding”* (4:22).
2. The vision of the future (v. 19a)
  - a. The reason for the lament was expressed in the command for the reader to *“behold”* and hear.
  - b. *“The cry of the daughter of my people”* was heard as from the land of her captivity expressing her bewilderment: *“Is the Lord not in Zion? Is her King not in her?”* In other words, “We thought God’s promise to grant David an everlasting dynasty would protect us from all threats no matter how we behaved.”
3. The Lord’s response (v. 19b)
  - a. The Lord answered the people with His own question: *“Why have they provoked me to anger with their carved images and with their foreign idols?”*
  - b. The folly of the daughters of Judah was based on their assumption that behavior is of no consequence in light of covenant promises. For example, churches fail, not because of failed *promise* (Matthew 16:18) on God’s part but because of failed *responsibility* on the people’s part.

4. The false expectation of deliverance (v. 20)
  - a. The end of verse 19 is translated “*foreign idols*” (ESV) but should read “foreign vanities,” a reference, not to false gods, but to foreign allies (probably Egypt) to save them from the invaders.
  - b. The period of hope symbolically referenced as *harvest* (spring grains) and *summer* (grape harvest) was gone; the Egyptians did not save them.
5. Their false expectations a grief to the prophet (v. 21, 22)
  - a. The wound was *spiritual*, and the grief was also spiritual (his heart).
  - b. Nevertheless, the future expectation of restoration was posed also in a question because true salvation is left for the future Messiah and the restoration to His chosen remnant.

## II. The Legacy

1. *Dishonor* and Tophet (8:1, 2)
2. *Despair* (v. 3) for the family survivors of the evil leaders who provoked the Lord and died in Hinnom—for them death would be preferred to life (Revelation 9:6).
3. *Dumb*, unable to function naturally (8:4–7)
4. *Dismayed* by reality contrasted to the assurance of lying scribes (8:8–12a)
5. *Doomed* by futile escape to safety (8:12b–15)

## III. The Lesson

1. What are the lessons to be learned?
  - a. The people thought themselves wise because they claimed to have the law (*torah*, teaching) of the Lord (v. 8). However, the Lord announced that “*the people know not the rules [mishpat, the judicial opinion of what is proper and fitting in the eyes] of the Lord*” (v. 7). The people believed themselves right with the Lord, but in His judicial opinion, what they did was not right—not His will. God alone is the judge of our lives, and only His opinion matters.
  - b. The ultimate reason for their foolishness (thinking themselves right) was that they did not *know* the Lord. They were put to shame because they “*rejected [ma’ac, despised or counted as unimportant] the word of the Lord.*” The Lord responded by asking, “*What wisdom [chokmah, in the religious sense as here, not fooled or deluded] is in them?*” Wisdom is *skill* to apply what one knows effectively in a craft or trade. In spiritual matters, it is skill in holy living in one’s relationship to those around him.
2. Where are these lessons learned?
  - a. The Word of God contains the law (*torah*, the teaching) of the Lord. Many think they know the Word of God because they have a little familiarity with it, but as Psalm 1:2 plainly teaches, full immersion in *torah* “*day and night*” is the only way to gain true wisdom from God.
  - b. *Knowing* the Lord is evidenced by the skill that a believer demonstrates in his relationship with the Lord and His people in the church. True wisdom marks a man or woman who, fearing the Lord, knows and does what God expects both in church and in the world.