

Jeremiah 40: 1-16; “Gather Wine and Summer Fruit”, Sermon # 46 in the series –
“Heart Lessons Learned for a Prophet and the People of God”,
Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on March 15th, 2020,
in the Morning Worship Service.

What are we to do when God’s judgments are increasingly coming to our land? That is the lesson of this chapter. Can we be happy and content to bloom where God has planted us, even when our land and Christ’s Church are increasingly being overrun with false doctrine and wicked people opposed to Biblical truth? Gedaliah, the man appointed governor by Nebuchadnezzar was a good leader for the people of God for the short time that he held office. In verse 9, we find him telling the people who looked to him for guidance, to gather wine and summer fruit and oil, and put them in their vessels. His instruction, I believe, has lessons for us. It is a picture of what we should not cease to do, spiritually, during times of the Lord’s judgments upon our land. There are 3 important exhortations that I would give to you, if you would spiritually flourish during times of national judgment. I will relate them in terms of the wine, the summer fruit, and the oil which Gedaliah told the people to gather.

1st – Do not cease to gather spiritual wine with the people of God; for it is this that will cheer your heart.

Verse 6 of chapter 40 says – “Then Jeremiah went to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, to Mizpah, and dwelt with him among the people who were left in the land.” Jeremiah went to stay with Gedaliah because he was one of the few believers left in Israel who could lead the people in the way of righteousness. Spiritually speaking, Jeremiah would gather wine with the people of God. He was going to try to minister to them, the truth of God’s word, even when they were under the judgments of God. Why? Because he knew that there was a remnant of true believers among them. And he knew that it was God’s will, that he should attempt to strengthen the hearts of any believers among them, even in that time of judgment.

In Isaiah 27, verse 2 it says – “In that day sing to her, a vineyard of red wine!” “I, the Lord, keep it, I water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I keep night and day.” The prophet is speaking of the New Covenant Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is prophesying of it in Old Testament times. Wine is one of the symbols of the New Covenant. We remember Christ when we partake of the wine in the Lord’s Supper. Jeremiah knew that he needed to be with the people of God, to continue to minister what he could. God would have him minister to the believing remnant, of the promises and prophecies of Christ, to cheer their heart. And he would also speak judgments as well to those who would not repent and believe in the promises of God. Let’s focus at this time on the truth which cheers the heart.

Listen to Psalm 104, verses 14 and 15. It says here – “He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and vegetation for the service of man, that he may bring forth food from the earth, and wine that makes glad the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread which strengthens man’s heart.” What these verses show us is that it is God who gives those things which are of service to man; things both physical and spiritual. He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and then men use these cattle to serve them, and they also use them for food. God declares that He does this to bring forth food from the earth, and, it says here – Wine that makes glad the heart of man glad, oil to make his face shine, and bread which will strengthen his heart.

Notice how a man’s heart is strengthened in a physical sense by what God does; what He provides for him. Wine, oil, and bread, being given to man on a regular on-going basis throughout his life, it says here. And His giving these things brings encouragement and strength to man’s heart, to continue on, hopefully, to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. A man’s heart is made glad by what God does in this regard. Wine, oil, and bread are also symbols of the

spiritual nourishment of grace which God gives through Jesus Christ our Lord. It is Christ's spiritual "wine" which strengthens our hearts during the many days of difficulties and the trials that will come to us. We realize that He suffered for us so that we could be saved. But we realize also that He suffered so that we might bear up under trials, and still have gladness. The wine of the New Covenant which was purchased by our Lord's blood, this exhilarates our heart with the encouraging truth of sins forgiven and the gift of the Holy Spirit to comfort and to cheer us as we go on our way towards heaven.

In Isaiah 55: 1 it says – "Ho!" "Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you have no money, come, buy and eat." "Yes, come buy wine and milk without money and without price." And the Lord Jesus says in Matthew 9: 17 – "Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined." "But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved." He is speaking here of the wine of His grace, and the old wineskin is the form of the Old Covenant, Old Testament worship as it was being practiced by the hypocritical Pharisees. The new wineskin is the New Covenant, New Testament form of worship of worshiping God through our Lord Jesus Christ. By grace and by the enlightenment of the Spirit's insight given to us in the word of God, we are spiritually strengthened to do God's will and to be cheered on our way in doing it. This is what we need to hold to and keep to, during the times of judgment which come upon our land.

In making this practical, you need first of all, to gather the wine of the New Covenant to the storehouse of your heart by reflecting often upon what the Lord Jesus has done for you. He has died so that you might live and have life more abundantly. (John 10: 10) And then, second, we need to appreciate so very much what it means to be able to gather with God's people to worship with them; to be able to learn together from His word; to share together all the blessings of the New Covenant; to participate in the Lord's Supper, and to remember each Sunday what He has the ongoing grace of His Spirit's working in our hearts.

Jeremiah, I would assert to you, was a New Covenant believer living in Old Covenant times. He and Gedaliah, the governor, and a remnant of the people of Israel, they truly knew the Lord. And some were still worshiping God in accordance with His ordinance for that time; in spirit and in truth. Jeremiah had been imprisoned for the Word of God. He had manacles on his wrists because he had told the people the truth about their sinfulness, and the consequences which would certainly come if they didn't repent. He had to tell them that they were going to experience misery, bondage, and captivity. But they would not listen to him.

Now, the Chaldeans had taken the city, but Nebuchadnezzar gave instructions to free Jeremiah, and so here in verse 4 we see that this freedom was granted to him. He now had a decision to make. He could stay with Nebuzaradan who said that he would look after him, or he could go to live with Gedaliah. You might think that Jeremiah was tired, by now, of preaching to a stubborn and insensitive people. He could have said – I need a break. A vacation in Babylon might do me good. I have fulfilled my obligation to the Lord and to this people. I am out of here! But this is not what Jeremiah did. It seemed wrong to him to go with Nebuzaradan, to Babylon. He did have a love for the people of God.

I hope that you will see what God would have you to see. When you come to Jesus Christ you are set free from all bondage. You are forgiven all of your sins. You are given a new life. You now have choices to make. You have decisions to make that will affect you, and the lives of other people around you; decisions which will affect the cause of Christ and the advance of His kingdom. Jeremiah made the right choice. He chose to stay with the people of God. He would identify with the people of God. He would go where they would go, and He would continue to minister to them. He gathered wine in abundance in terms of bringing them the word of God. If they received his words, they would repent of all of their sins, and know the working of God's

Spirit in their heart. The same will be true of us if we will see the house of God and the people of God as being a house of wine.

Years ago I used to meet with a church who used the *Hymns of Truth and Praise* hymnbook. We used to sing a hymn which has many of the same verses that hymn # 599 has, in our Trinity Hymnal – *The Sands of time are Sinking*. There is one verse, however, which I wish our Trinity Hymn book had put in. It goes like this. “With mercy and with judgment my web of time He wove, and aye the dews of sorrow were lusted with His love.” “I’ll bless the hand that guided, I’ll bless the heart that planned, when throned where glory dwelleth in Immanuel’s land.” The 3rd verse is included in our hymnal. It goes like this: Oh!” “I am my Beloved’s, and my Beloved’s mine!” “He brings a poor vile sinner into His house of wine!” “I stand upon His merit.” “I know no other stand, not e’en where glory dwelleth, in Immanuel’s land.” The house of wine is Christ’s gathered church, we who celebrates Christ’s death and resurrection in the Lord’s Supper. It is around His table, and in His house, that we hold sweet communion together; rejoicing in all of the blessings of our salvation.

I believe that in this chapter Jeremiah is teaching us that it is always the right thing for a Christian to do, to take their stand for the truth of the Bible with the people of God. It is especially important for a Christian minister not to see those people of God who are not doing a very good job of receiving the word of God, as the enemy. He needs to see them as sheep who need a shepherd, and he needs to do all that he can to help them to come to a sincere obedience to God’s word, even in times when the Lord’s judgments are falling all around them. He should gather the wine of the New Covenant blessings of Christ, and he should present it to them in his preaching and in the Lord’s Supper. And he should lead them into the truth by being a good example of Christian love to others around him, whose love may have grown cold.

Sometimes this may be the case, even with believers, because things are not going well for them. Our society seems to be rapidly on the decline in regard to loving one another. John Calvin says – “For if Jeremiah had gone to Chaldea, it might have been that the confidence of many would have failed them, and that faith in the promises would have vanished: for they might have thought it a sign of hopeless despair, had the Prophet gone there.” “That he might not then disturb weak minds, he thought it his duty to remain in his own country.” (end of quote) So the lesson for us is – gather the wine of the blessings of Christ and bring it into the gathered church, the storehouse of God. Speak of God’s continual provision in Christ and strengthen the hands of your brethren,.

2nd – Do not cease to gather summer fruits with the people of God, for it is this that will glorify God in such times.

Gathering summer fruits in the time which we are speaking about, is related to those things which the people of God did, following Gedaliah’s example. Listen to verses 7-12 once again. “And when all the captains of the armies who were in the fields, they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor in the land, and had committed to him men, women, children, and the poorest of the land who had not been carried away captive to Babylon, then they came to Gedaliah at Mizpah – Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth, the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, and Jezaniah the son of a Maachathite, they and their men.”

“And Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, took an oath before them and their men, saying, ‘Do not be afraid to serve the Chaldeans.’ “Dwell in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you.” “As for me, I will indeed dwell at Mizpah and serve the Chaldeans who come to us.” “But you, gather wine and summer fruit and oil, put them in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that you have taken.” “Likewise, when all the Jews who were in Moab, among the Ammonites, in Edom, and who were in all the countries, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant of Judah, and that he had set over them Gedaliah the son of Ahikam,

the son of Shaphan, then all the Jews returned out of all places where they had been driven, and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah at Mizpah, and gathered wine and summer fruit in abundance.”

So Gedaliah was the man appointed by Nebuchadnezzar to be governor over the people, now that the land had been conquered by the Chaldeans. Men, women, and children, and some of the poorest people of the land, who remained, would be under authority to him, it says. We can say also that it is a good thing for Christian people to submit to authority, according to the direction of God. God had given Gedaliah and the people with him, word concerning this; that they should continue to remain in the land; those who were left, and in doing so, they would be blessed by God, even though they were being ruled by a foreign dictator. (Jeremiah 37: 2) Even so, if they would also then, submit to Nebuchadnezzar’s appointed ruler in Gedaliah, then they could expect blessing. Gedaliah took good leadership over the people by swearing an oath before them and their men. He said – Do not be afraid to serve the Chaldeans. Dwell in the land serve the king of Babylon and it shall be well with you.

We learn from this that it is not a good thing to run away from the place that God puts you in, just because the land and the place that you live in, are under the judgments of God. God would have you to live to Him in whatever place and in whatever circumstances that He leads you to, and places you in. Just running away, or moving away, will not necessarily solve the problem that you are experiencing. Much good can be done by having respect to Biblically appointed authorities; to listen to their counsel and to act upon it prayerfully. Gedaliah instructed them to gather wine and summer fruit in abundance, and when they began to do so, it says in verse 12 that all the Jews returned out of all the places where they had been driven, and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah at Mizpah, and they gathered wine and summer fruits in abundance. Summer fruits were figs and apples, the fruits of trees, and not fruits of the earth, such as corn and wheat. Both the barley and the wheat harvests were over before this time.

Since this is the case, I believe that we can spiritually apply this to ourselves in this way. The Bible often talks about believing people as trees who are the planting of the Lord. A good tree will produce good fruit. The Lord Jesus says this about our fruit bearing in John chapter 15, verses 1-8 – “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.” “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.” “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you.” “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.” “I am the vine, you are the branches.” “He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” “If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.” “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.” “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

We have spoken of the New Wine of Christ’s grace in the New Covenant. Now we need to think together about the believer’s fruit gathering fruit bearing capacity as a believer; the way that we glorify God with our life as a Christian. We do so by gathering with Him, good fruits. When Gedaliah was telling the people with him that they needed to gather wine and summer fruits, he was doing this so that they would be encouraged by the Lord’s blessings to them; that if they would abide in doing God’s will and dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness, they would be blessed, they would be glorifying God. Gedaliah was saying to them, imitate me in what I am doing, in doing the will of God. It is out of doing the will of God that good fruit, the summer fruits are gathered in, both in be blessed, and in being a blessing to others in your service to God.

Paul would say – Imitate me as I imitate Christ. But imitation is only enough if you do not have true grace. It is only when you see the Lord Jesus as the true vine, and understand that it is

your abiding in Him, continuing to look to Him for spiritual life and wisdom and grace, that you will bear good fruit unto holiness and righteousness. If you abide Him, you will have good works flowing out of your living relationship with Him. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, and self-control. Do you have these in your heart? Do you bring these into your relationship with people in the church? If you are abiding in Him, you will do this. If you do not abide in Him, that is, in the truth of who He is as the Son of God, and the perfect righteousness that He worked out on your behalf, and looking to Him for imparted grace to forgive your sins and to teach you how to live your life to God, then you do not really understand the purpose of the life of a Christian; you will fail to bear good fruit as a branch professing to know Him, you will wither on the vine, and eventually be taken away. You will leave the church or be excommunicated. And you will cast out as a branch, and be gathered with the wicked on the Day of Judgment and thrown into the fire.

This is what happened to a good number of the people in Israel because they would not receive God's word to them, let alone abide in it. This happened to many of those who went into captivity, and also many of those who remained in the land. The all-important principle for us to remember is this: If you are going to bear fruit for Him, you must abide in Christ. You must abide in His grace and His truth, and by this means you will think about what it means to think righteously. You will go about to right things and good works. And you will seek to lead others to Christ; whom to know, is eternal life.

In this holy process of interaction with the living Christ, the Father will prune you; He will cut off certain worldly things and selfish pursuits from your life; things which are not profitable for you to have or to continue in, things which will not help you to bear fruit. He will do this out of love for you, so that you will bear even more fruit for Him. You will become useful to Him the Master in service to Him and you will receive wages for your gathering fruit for eternal life, so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.

3rd – Do not cease to gather oil with the people of God, for it is this that will ensure that you are prepared for Christ's coming for you in particular.

Verse 13 – Moreover Johanan the son of Kareah and all the captains of the forces that were in the fields came to Gedaliah at Mizpah, and said to him, 'Do you certainly know that Baalis the king of the Ammonites has sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to murder you?' 'But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam did not believe them.' 'Then Johanan the son of Kareah spoke secretly to Gedaliah in Mizpah, saying, 'Let me go, please, and I will kill Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no one will know it.' 'Why should he murder you, so that all the Jews who are gathered to you would be scattered, and the remnant in Judah perish?' 'But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said to Johanan the son of Kareah, 'You shall not do this thing, for you speak falsely concerning Ishmael.'

We are going to see, in the next message that I preach to you, that Gedaliah will end up being murdered by Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, because he did not want to believe that Ishmael would do such a thing. And so what should we learn from these awful events? Several things. Gedaliah was the man in authority over the remnant of Israel by the appointment of Nebuchadnezzar. Johanan and all the captains of the forces in the fields, came to him because they were submitting to his authority, but they wanted to safeguard the remnant of Israel. They had heard of Ishmael's alliance with the king of the Ammonites, and that he had sent Ishmael to murder Gedaliah, and so they came to warn him of this. Johanan spoke secretly to Gedaliah and offered to go and kill Ishmael before he could get a chance to murder Gedaliah. A good reason is given as well; that if Gedaliah was murdered all the Jews who were gathered to him would be scattered, and the remnant in Judah would perish.

We can truly say that Johanan's fears were reasonable fears. Gedaliah, we should understand, was a holy man. He was a man who would have agreed with the apostle Paul when

he wrote in 1st Corinthians 13: 4 – “Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” “Love never fails.” Gedaliah was a kind and loving man. He had seen no evidence of Ishmael’s having a treacherous heart in thinking about his actions. He had only just heard this bad report of him from Johanan. He wanted to believe the best about Ishmael, and not what might turn out to be an evil report. And so he said to Johanan – “You shall not do this thing, for you speak falsely concerning Ishmael.” From a worldly wise perspective we can say – Oh, what a naïve man he was in this particular regard. How should we think of what he did?

I think that we need to think of Gedaliah in these terms, as a man who was prepared to live for God, no matter what anyone else did, and no matter what happened to him. He was not going to live listening to conspiracy theories, and he was not going to become a bitter, critical, complaining man just because many in society were becoming that way. He knew the Lord, and he had the spiritual oil in the vessel of his heart. He was going to dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. He had gathered this spiritual oil to his heart by faith in Christ. His fault was that since he was appointed to this delegated rule over the remnant, that he should have taken action to have Ishmael arrested and confined until it could be determined what his intent was. Gedaliah could have asked Johanan to keep a defense force ready to watch Ishmael closely so that Gedaliah and many others would be protected. This Gedaliah did not do, and as such, it was a terrible mistake, thinking about it from the standpoint of defending the people of God.

Therefore, we should ask – Why did God permit this; Ishmael’s treacherous murder of Gedaliah and many other people? It was because God was acting very thoroughly to judge the nation of Israel. We will see the answer in coming chapters that Johanan and many of the people following his lead were really hypocrites. They claimed to be the people of God, but many of them were worshipping idols. God knew this, and so he allowed Gedaliah to be killed to take him away from all of this sin and hypocrisy, and to further judge the remnant of the nation. He sees all of the hearts of men and he judges every man according to their works. Listen to Isaiah 57: 1 and 2 – “The righteous perishes and no man takes it to heart; merciful men are taken away, while no one considers that the righteous is taken away from evil.” “He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.”

Knowing these things, each of us needs to be prepared by having oil in our vessels, the grace of Christ in our hearts, and the Holy Spirit leading us and guiding us. Evil men and hypocrites may deal unrighteously with us; even put us to death, but by faith we will have gathered this oil, we will have had dealings with God in repentance and faith. And if we do this we will be delivered from having to see and to participate in the much worse things that will come if people around us will not repent. Let us remember Hebrews 5: 7. Christ was a Man who learned obedience by the things that He suffered. Christ was a Man who was treacherously betrayed by Judas and crucified by men trusting in themselves that they were righteous. If we die at the hands of wicked men, we will be taken immediately to God; perhaps sooner than we might have wanted to be taken. But Christian people are those who live by a forward looking faith. We know that we cannot hold on to the past. We do not want to. It is onward and upward for us, to live forever with Jesus.