

JEREMIAH 8

IS THERE NO BALM IN GILEAD?

The first three verses of this chapter describe some of the gruesome yet righteous judgments of the Lord that were to come upon the people of the kingdom of Judah. It is prophesied that the remains of those who worshiped idols would be brought out of their graves and left to bleach in the sun. No real hurt can be done to a dead body; yet when such public disgrace is shown to the remains of notoriously wicked persons, it may alarm those who are still alive. And as for those who remain alive, they will be brought to the point where they wish rather to die than to live (verse 3). All of this is a reminder to us that for those who die in unbelief, the Lord's Divine justice and punishments extend even beyond the grave. Let us take heed to the sobering spectacle that is here presented to our view; and let us humble ourselves before God, and seek His mercy!

What brought about this ruin? We are given the answers in verses 4-13. The first cause of this lamentable destruction was that in the affairs of their souls, the people would not act with common prudence (verses 4-5). To willfully and willingly walk in the ways of sin is to backslide; it is going back from the way that leads to life, and choosing that which leads to death and destruction. Second, they would not listen to the warnings that the Holy Spirit gave them through their consciences (verse 6). They did not take even the first little step toward repentance; for true repentance begins in serious inquiry as to what we have done, which arises from the conviction that we have done amiss. Third, they would not hearken to the ways of Providence, nor understand the voice of God in them (verse 7). They did not even care to learn how to make use of the seasons of grace which God mercifully gave them. Many boast of their religious knowledge; yet unless they are taught by the Holy Spirit, the instinct of animals is a more sure guide than their supposed "wisdom." Fourth, these people would not give ear to the Lord's written Word (verses 8-9). It is sad but true that very many persons enjoy an abundance of the means of grace, and have good access to Bibles and faithful ministers; but they have them in vain because they do not care to make the proper use of them – which is to learn Christ's Gospel of peace! And sooner or later, they will be ashamed of their ignorance. A final cause of this destruction was that the people's spiritual leaders flattered them in their sins; and thereby they flattered them into destruction, by silencing their fears and complaints with the words, "All is well!" (verses 10-11) Wicked teachers promise peace when there really is no peace, and thus they encourage their fellow human beings in committing evil; but in the time of judgment (verses 12-

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ The terrible judgments that were coming upon God's people – verses 1-3
- ❖ The prophet laments the wretched and willful ignorance of the people, which brought this ruin upon them – verses 4-12
- ❖ He speaks of the great consternation that the people would be in – verses 13-22

13), they will have no refuge to flee to! Thus it was predicted that the people would eventually begin to see the hand of God lifted up against them (verses 14-22). And when Jehovah rises up against a person or a nation, it is a formidable situation indeed! They will be given gall to drink, as a recompense for their obstinacy and rebellion against Him (verse 14). They will look for peace in these days of trouble and judgment, but it will be far away out of their reach (verse 15); for the Lord will send very uncomfortable agents to make them feel His wrath and displeasure (verses 16-17). Such recipients of the Lord's righteous judgments will endeavor to find comfort in the midst of these terrible sorrows (verse 18); but since they seek this comfort outside of Christ, they will not find it and their hearts will faint. Since salvation only can only be found in the Lord, it should be seized in the present moment, while we still have an opportunity – before the offer of free mercy is closed to us forever! *Today is the day of salvation! Do not put it off until tomorrow, for that may be one day too late!*

It was a sad and melancholy situation that the prophet found his people in (verses 19-22). All of the best opportunities in which the people might have searched for grace and found it – they had come and gone, and they were wasted. The prime summertime in which the Lord's offers of mercy were extended had now faded into the harvest-days of autumn, and even these days were swiftly passing away; and they were still as rebellious and hard-hearted as they had ever been (verses 20). The prophet of God was terrified at the dreadful prospect of the everlasting hurt that awaited his countrymen if they continued to squander the final chances that were – as yet – still being offered by the Lord (verse 21).



Was there no proper medicine for such a sick and dying kingdom? And was there no skillful, faithful hand to apply the healing remedy? Yes! God Himself was able and willing to help and heal them; and even now, He is still able and willing to do the same for all who repent and believe on the Savior! Thus, if any sinner dies from the wounds of his sin, his blood is upon his own head. There is indeed a healing balm in Gilead (a reference to a place in the land of Israel that was noted for its fertility and loveliness), and there is a Physician there! Jesus' blood and righteousness are an everlasting, never-failing balm for sin-sickened souls; and He Himself is the Almighty, All-present, and All-sufficient Physician, whereby every spiritually diseased person may find complete and lasting healing! And if you are about to ask, "Why, then, are some people not recovered?" – the answer is given by Jesus Himself. He says, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life" (John 5:40). The reason why some persons die unpardoned and unchanged is because they refuse to come to Christ to be saved; for He stands ready and waiting to heal any soul that comes to Him in faith!

All praises to You, Jehovah-Rophi – "the Lord our Healer" – for You alone have the sovereign power and willingness to heal us from all our spiritual diseases! Amen.