

IS THERE NO BALM IN GILEAD? Part 11

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“Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?” Jer. 8:22

We return to Jeremiah 8:22 again this morning to our studies on: Is There No Balm in Gilead, this will be part 11. We hi-lighted last week on chapters 1-7 of Jeremiah to help us understand the heart and mind of Jeremiah in making such accusations by his sharp and excruciating questions.

We have already set forth that these rhetorical questions came from Jeremiah’s heart and soul. We have also said that these were very powerful and compelling questions under great spiritual duress. The reason he is agonizing spiritually is because of what he has preached unto them in the prior 7 chapters which just about drain the heart and soul of the prophet so by the time he gets to verse 21 he is exasperated and perplexed because of the people’s unconcerned and indifferent attitude, therefore he laments in verse 21, *“For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; [Don’t tell me that true gospel preachers are cold and unconcerned or mere plastic men, Jeremiah says, I AM HURT] I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me.”* This emotional and overwhelming astonishment affected the physical features of the prophets as to actually distort his appearance which cause his face to appear pallid and black. Why was he so wounded and hurt in his heart? Why was he so astonished? Again, we answer:

- He was hurt and astonished at the rebellion and unconcerned attitude that the people of his day were displaying. They laid languishing in sin without care. *“Is there no balm in Gilead...”*
- He was hurt astonished because the people were careless in making light about the remedy that was provided by God, as though there was no hope. *“...Is there no physician there?”*
- He was so hurt and astonished that the sickness of sin was so great and that the remedy was greater and yet they did not respond to his call to repentance and salvation. *“...Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?”*

Again, as already mentioned in my past messages, you would almost think that Jeremiah was living in the 21st century speaking in particular to America, as he was so broken over the deep languishing of sin in his nation, because their hearts were cold with a callous attitude about the whole matter. Their condition was desperate and their wounds deep that he expresses his intense feeling for their souls, *“For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me.”* A true prophet of God is always astonished at the

lack of interest of sinners for the gospel. It is their only hope for salvation and they treat it as a thing or a trivial thing; God help us. We set forth 3 points before you last week:

- I. **The Rebellious People.**
- II. **The Remedy Provided.**
- III. **The Responding Prophet.**

As we conclude our first point this morning on The Rebellious People, let me again remind you that we have been comparing the words of Jeremiah along with the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 1.

Remember that in Jeremiah chapter 2, Jeremiah makes a powerful statement to help prick their conscience **[The purpose of preaching is to speak to your conscience and not to entertain you with smooth and pampering words, I'm here this morning to speak to your conscience and that it would affect your heart to cause you to call upon the LORD]** so again, Jeremiah makes a powerful statement to help prick their conscience with such a thundering and reproofing sermon in seeking to pierce their hearts with a heart-felt conviction, thus, in verse 5 he says, *"Thus saith the LORD [NOT JEREMIAH, BUT THE LORD!], What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?"* Jeremiah is showing their folly as they were following gods of their own imagination and idols of their own making as he charges them with 2 sins in particular. Verses 11-13 *"Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. 12 Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD. 13 For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."*

- They departed from the Living and True God who was their deliverer.
- They became vain in their delusive idols.

God rebukes them sharply because there was no reason to leave and forsake God as though He is saying to them, *"What sin or iniquity have I committed to distance yourself from me?"* God rebukes them because there was no reason for them to alienate themselves from Him. They could not say, *"We have been deceived or misled or lied to."* Talk about spiritual adultery there you have it. Notice how they are described, but again they also describe modern day preachers who neither know the Law of God nor His truth! They are described 3 ways:

- They have transgressed against God.
- They prophesized by Baal.
- They walk after things that do not profit.

How sad, that many in our day also exchange the True and Living God for a god of their imagination, for a god of their own making which is in reality no god at all? There are many, in this 21st century, that still do this. As we said last many of time from this pulpit, whatever stands between you and God is your idol. Notice the rebuke of Jeremiah to the people in 2:28, “*But where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble: **for according to the number of thy cities are thy gods,** O Judah.” For according to the number of your cities so are your gods, wow that sounds just like America.*

People have exchanged the Living and True God for an idol that is empty and or vain, again verse 11, “*Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.*” Interesting that there are some comparisons seen in Romans chapter 1 as here in Jeremiah 2: Turn to Romans 1.

- The end of verse 5: “...and have walked after vanity, and **are become vain?**”
- Middle and last part of verse 8: “...they...**knew me not**...and walked after things that do not profit.”
- Verse 11, “*Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? **but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.**”*
- Verse 13, “*For my people have committed two evils; **they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters,** and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”*

Now, we have already seen that in Romans 1 Paul begins his treatise on justification by faith from verse 16 all the way to Romans 3:20 and that which permeates the whole book of Romans is set forth here by Paul, “THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD!” Notice also the juxtaposition seen in verses 17 and 18:

- The righteousness of **God REVEALED:**
- The wrath of **God REVEALED:**

These two attributes of God are set forth side by side in revealing the glory of the Living and True God. Now, these two attributes are two rarely spoken attributes of God, because all sinners are told is, “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” I’m still looking for that verse, but I haven’t found it yet, maybe someone can help me. Most people rarely or never hear about the righteousness of God or about the wrath of God, but Paul sets them forth here side by side so that people can have somewhat of an understanding of who God is and therefore the peril of meeting this God without being saved in Christ Jesus. Paul; clearly blows the trumpet with a loud and compelling warning to all people that this is the God with whom they will have to give an account of their lives when they shall meet Him one day, on this side of eternity or on the other side in eternity. But again the problem is that man continues to suppress and hold down this truth as we see in verse 18, “*For the wrath of God **is revealed from heaven** against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.*” Man continues to suppress and hold down the word of God, that is, the Bible

in unrighteousness. The phrase, "WHO HOLD," is the Greek word '**KATHECHO**,' which literally means to hold down, to squash or suppress. It is made up from two Greek words, 'KATA = down' and "ECHO = hold," thus, to hold down and or suppress. Interesting that this Greek word is in the present tense which denotes that men and women are continually, actively, willfully and deliberately hindering the truth about God's word, that is, this word is also in the active voice which denotes that they are constantly attacking the word of God with their so-called free will, which is their volitional choice, that is, a choice of their wicked will. Why, because the book you have in your hand's is diametrically opposed to the mindset of the world's secular humanism! One writer says, "*Katecho conveys the picture of putting all one's weight upon something in an effort to restrict it's free movement, in this case to restrict the free movement of truth which sets men free.*" Another writes says, "*Paul is describing the "disease" of every man, a "disease" that must be recognized before seeking a cure. The bad news precedes the good news. The biblical order in any gospel presentation is always first the warning of danger and then the way of escape. God's righteous judgment against sin is proclaimed before His gracious forgiveness of sin is offered. A person has no reason to seek salvation from sin if he does not know he is condemned by it. He has no reason to want spiritual life unless he realizes he is spiritually dead.*"

Then Paul gives us the two of the three influential and communicating witnesses who can articulate clearly in conveying that there is a LIVING and TRUE God with whom we must all acquaint ourselves with, that is, the conscience and creation in verse 19, "*Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them (conscience); for God hath shewed it unto them (creation).*" No one can escape these two witnesses who proof beyond reasonable doubt that there is a God to whom we will give an account of our lives. Listen to the words of Christ, Matthew 12:36 & 37, "*But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. 37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.*" Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived besides Christ, said this, Eccl.12:13 & 14, "*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. 14 For God shall bring every work (Every thought, word, deed and action, every lie, yea for that matter every sin) into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*"

The next two verses in Romans 1:20 & 21, "**For** *the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse; 21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." Verse 20 begins with the word for, which in the Greek is '**GAR**.' In the Greek this is a subordinating conjunction which speaks how:*

- God **HAD** and
- God **CONTINUES**
- To give knowledge of Him-self is evident to all mankind.

Charles Hodge, says, "*This verse is a confirmation and amplification of the preceding, inasmuch as it proves that God does manifest Himself to men, shows how this manifestation is made, and draws the*

inference that men are, in virtue of this revelation, inexcusable for their impiety. The argument is, God has manifested the knowledge of Himself to men, for the invisible things of Him, that is, his eternal power and Godhead, are, since the creation, clearly seen, being understood by His works; they are therefore without excuse.” Charles Spurgeon has a sermon on these verses 20 & 21: “Inexcusable, Irreverence and Ingratitude.” The Greek for creation is: ‘**Ktisis**’ which speaks of bringing something into existence which did not or had not existed before. This speaks of the creative act of God, that is, creating and or causing to exist that which did not exist before, Ps.33:6-9, “**By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.** 7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. 8 Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. 9 **For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.**” Amen and Amen! Heb.11:3, “Through faith we understand that **the worlds were framed by the word of God**, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” In real simple terms, God spoke and it was done, the worlds, that is, the whole aspect of the universe were framed and perfectly joined together by the word of God. The word world in verse 20 is of course the Greek word, ‘**Kosmos**,’ describes an orderly arrangement that is perfectly joined together in the order of the universe. The world, yea the universe is in perfect arrangement in contrast to some awful chaos of some big bang theory of a false Darwinian evolution. This is clearly seen, even in the aspect of those things that are invisible, whether it’s His attributes and or those things we still have not seen, like the stars moving with great speed and accuracy in their orbits or perhaps those things in other galaxies, but regardless, there is enough manifestation in the creation of the universe to show that there is a God and therefore, no one is without excuse! The phrase, clearly seen is the Greek word, ‘**Kathorao**,’ (kata-rraro) which is a compound word from ‘**kata**’ which means down from and ‘**horao**’ which means to see and perceiving, thus, to look down from above or to view from on high, that to clearly behold, to see fully and distinctly. What is interesting about this Greek word is that it is in the present tense which indicates that the world and universe are continually on display and continually beheld. As one writer says, “*It’s not as if God gives rebellious, truth rejecting mankind one brief peak of His glorious handiwork.*”

The sad thing is that in spite of God’s continual display of His handiwork in creation and God’s continual internal alarm system of man’s conscience, man still fights against God and suppresses, that is, holds down His truth and in turn they seek to dethrone Him by seeking to humanize God and deify man! Man tries to bring God down to their level in their vain imaginations and in the process they glorify Him not nor are they thankful and are become foolish, so foolish that they finally exchange the truth of God for a lie and create a God of their own imaginations. This is what we see in verses 21 - 23, “*Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.*” Look at the pattern of fallen man in their suppressing and holding

down the truth even though God gives us two visible and reliable sound witnesses that clearly shows us and tells us that there is a Living and True God that renders them without excuse:

- They glorified Him not.
- Neither were they thankful.
- They became vain in their imaginations.
- Their foolish heart was darkened.
- Professing them-selves to be wise.
- They became fools.
- They changed the glory of the un-corruptible God.
- Into an image of corruptible man.
- To birds.
- To four-footed beasts.
- To creeping things.

What an awful pattern, man in their vain imaginations becomes a glorified ape before their own eyes! Thus, the awful results of this willful and obstinate rebellion: Verses 24 & 25, *“Wherefore God also **gave them up** to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: 25 **Who changed the truth of God into a lie**, and **worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator**, who is blessed forever. Amen.”*

They did not want to glorify God, they did not honor God and were neither thankful to their creator! Because of this, they became vain in their imaginations and their foolish hearts were darkened. When a person does not honor God and when a person does not glorify God, they will be unthankful; they will be a group of murmuring and complaining people all the time. They have nothing to be thankful for, therefore, they complain, complain and complain about everything in life, everything just goes bad, you know they have bad karma, bad luck and are but grumbling all the time, nothing satisfies, nothing helps they are a continual pessimistic people! They don't want God, they don't have time for God, they are most miserable people, because they can never find purpose in life, because everything is of course, by chance, you see, in their hearts and minds there really is no God, no purpose, no plan, no providence, just this miserable life of constant complaining and murmuring. When you ask them about God or try to witness, they become prideful and hardhearted and let you know what they think of your so called god. Thus, they suppress the truth of God and become vain in their imaginations.

I'm so glad that God has not left us to ourselves but has given us a three-fold witness that we might know that there is a God to whom we will all give an account of our lives one day.

What about you, what will you say to God when you die and meet Him face to face? Will you die in your sins to the detriment of your soul or will you die in the grace of salvation, completely cleanse from sin by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ with a blessed entrance to heaven? What about you, where will you spend eternity, heaven or hell?

Both books, Jeremiah and Romans reveal with such clarity the effects of depravity when people move themselves away from the truth of God's word, that is, the Bible, wherein God gives us a self-revelation of Him-self to us and of our true heart condition in awful depravity. From Genesis to Revelation we see this regarding God's 3-fold witnesses:

- The Truth which is the Word of God, great light is given to us by God but man continues in Suppressing the TRUTH: Romans 1:18, "*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.*"
- The Conscience: Romans 1:19, "*Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them...*"
- Creation: Romans 1:19 & 20, "*...for God hath shewed it unto them. 20 *For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.**"

Those who reject God's truth, God's Word, the Bible for man's humanistic ideologies will end up believing that they are wise in their own eyes only to become fools as we saw last week in Voltaire and Thomas Paine. Remember, that God has sought out to reveal Himself to man only to have man sidestep Him and worship the works of their own hands. God has made everything possible to know Him, but man willfully and obstinately rejects, His truth, His Word, the Bible! This is so sad, especially when you think about it because from the very beginning God has been pleased to reveal Himself to us. What is one of the purposes of the Bible? I'll let John answer this question turn to John 20:31, "*But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*"

Now, as a reminder 2 out of the 3 revelatory means that God uses are insufficient to save us, but they do convey and communicate that there is a Living and True God to whom we will give an account of our lives one day. Again, the conscience and creation are insufficient to bring us to God or save us, but again, it's enough revelation to show and proof that there is a God. But God also reveals Himself to us in His Word, the Bible, Therefore, the word of God can be sufficient to bring us to salvation when the Holy Spirit quicken His word to our hearts in the grace of regeneration, this is called special revelation or supernatural revelation, the other two are called natural or general revelation. From the beginning God has been pleased to reveal Himself and He has never been without a witness as to the truth, that there is a Living and True God. The Apostle Paul preaching in Acts 14 says this in verses 15-17, "*And*

saying, *Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: 16 Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. 17 **Nevertheless he left not himself without witness**, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.*"

Thus, we see the awful aspect of our first point, The Rebellious People.

This brings us to our second point which we will hi-light only because time has escaped us:

II. The Remedy Provided. “...*Is there no physician there?*”

Our first point, the rebellious people is the bad news and in this second point, the remedy provided we see the good news. No doubt that the prophet Jeremiah was overwhelmed with the rebellious nature of the people and even though he was astounded with the sight and sense of sin of the people of his day, God brought before him a view of the needful remedy. Thus, Jeremiah brought them hope also, not just gloom and doom, but hope and expectation. When Jeremiah asks, “*Is there no balm in Gilead,*” and “...*Is there no physician there?*” These two questions are but rhetorical questions, because there is BALM to HEAL and there is a PHYSICIAN to CURE! But, Jeremiah is asking as though, he is saying, are you living this way because you think that there is no hope or have you plum forgotten what God has said? He is telling them, your case is desperate, you have wondered far off from God, you have neglected Him because you think your case is hopeless and without remedy. But, what Jeremiah means by these questions “*Is there no balm in Gilead,*” and “*Is there no physician there,*” is that, THERE is A BALM in Gilead and that there is a PHYSICIAN to HELP your wounded heart, but the problem is, that they were acting as though there was no hope or balm. They were acting as though there was no remedy, but Jeremiah was seeking to convey to them that God was the only hope for them and He is the only hope for us. You see, Jeremiah wants them to know and for us to know that there is a REMEDY PROVIDED; there is hope. Again, this balm that Jeremiah is speaking about is a glorious type of the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The blood of Christ is the only remedy for sinners. May God be pleased to quicken this to your hearts this morning, that is, if your see yourself drowning and going under in your sins, if sin heavy upon your heart this morning, oh I bid you this morning to fly, fly to the Lord Jesus Christ, so that His blood, yea His balm may soothe your soul. You see there is a fountain opened wide for sin so that sinners might plunge and be cleansed.

Again, we ask what did this balm signified. Gilead was a country beyond Jordon where certain trees grew of great value and rarity. From the trunk and branches these special trees

distilled a highly pleasant fragrance from its sticky juice or gum which was said to be powerfully potent in healing wounds. This balm was applied to wounds so that they would recover from their wounds. Interesting that we find the Ishmaelite merchants to whom Joseph was sold by his brethren were taking some of this balm to Egypt in Genesis 37:25, “*And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.*” Later on when Jacob sought to appease the chief lord of Egypt, whom he knew not to be his son Joseph, he told his sons, to take some balm with them as suitable offering in Genesis 43:11, “*And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds.*” It thus became a celebrated balm for its healing properties and because of its scarcity, the trees growing in no other soil or climate; it gave it a higher reputation. Therefore the prophet viewing on the one hand the sinners desperate case and on the other God own appointed and divinely contrived remedy asks, the rhetorical question, “*Is there no balm in Gilead?*” The prophet saw the effects of sins in his people and saw them dying in their sins and iniquities which prompt him to ask these powerful rhetorical questions, as though he is pleading with them, is there no hope for your sins, must you go down to the pit without help, must they sigh in their hearts without any means of pardon or peace? The question clearly implies that there is balm in Gilead, that is, there is a remedy a cure for sin! God had provided the needed remedy which is suitable to the desperate condition of the people. But the problem is; that there is more balm to heal than there is guilt to would, in other words God is more willing to save sinners than sinners are willing to be saved. Yes, there is more is grace to save than there is in sin to destroy, because where sins abound, GRACE DOES MUCH MORE ABOUND! Why, why then should these people languish? Why are they so sick and sore? Why are they so blinded and confused, why do they not come to the fountain opened wide for sin? Why do they continue in their sins in the broad road of destruction? Is there no forgiveness from God, is there no more cleansing blood and is there no more hope for sinners? Why do sinners die as though there is no remedy? Is there no one to share the good news of salvation of the glorious grace of God, is there none to bring the sinner to God and is there no blood applied to perishing sinners? Notice the words of Christ in Matthew 12:31, “*Wherefore I say unto you, **All manner of sin** and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men ...*” The Apostle John echo’s in 1 John 1:7, “*...the **blood of Jesus Christ** his Son **cleanseth us from all sin.***” The blood of Christ washes and cleanses from ALL MANNER of SIN! Revelation 1:5 says “*...Unto him (Jesus Christ) that loved us, and **washed us from our sins in his own blood.***” Consider these words from the Bible, weight them well, they speak with such clarity, there is no ambiguity or confusion in them, it says that the blood of Christ cleanses us from “ALL SIN,” that is, all sins before salvation, all sins after salvation, sins of thoughts and deeds, sins of commission and sins of omission, sins against the gospel, against love, against the Law of

God, against light, against God, sins of every shape, size and color, in every form. Not just some sins, but every sin, not just many sins but ALL SIN! Not just from a few hundred sins, a thousand sins or a million sins, but, "...the **blood of Jesus Christ** his Son **cleanseth us from all sin.**" Think about this, how many sins do we commit in one day, for mere simple equation let's just say, 10 sins in one hour, $10 \times 24 = 240$ per day. 240×365 days a year = 87,600. $87,600 \times 10$ years = 870,000. At my age $87,600 \times 58 = 5,080,800$. Over 5 million sins, but to think that the blood of Christ cleanses and washes me from all, yes ALL MY SINS! Remember this is just on the lower scale of 10 sins per hour. This is the hope for all sinners: "...the **blood of Jesus Christ** his Son **cleanseth us from all sin.**" Jer.8:14, "**Why do we sit still?**" 8:20, "**The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.**"

Exodus 12:13 And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. Ephesians 1:7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Hebrews 9:14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

By William Cowper:

1. There is a fountain filled with blood
drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
and sinners plunged beneath that flood
lose all their guilty stains.
Lose all their guilty stains,
lose all their guilty stains;
and sinners plunged beneath that flood
lose all their guilty stains.
2. The dying thief rejoiced to see
that fountain in his day;
and there may I, though vile as he,
wash all my sins away.
Wash all my sins away,
wash all my sins away;
and there may I, though vile as he,
wash all my sins away.
3. Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
shall never lose its power
till all the ransomed church of God
be saved, to sin no more.
Be saved, to sin no more,
be saved, to sin no more;
till all the ransomed church of God
be saved, to sin no more.

4. E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream
thy flowing wounds supply,
redeeming love has been my theme,
and shall be till I die.
And shall be till I die,
and shall be till I die;
redeeming love has been my theme,
and shall be till I die.

5. Then in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing thy power to save,
when this poor lisping, stammering tongue
lies silent in the grave.
Lies silent in the grave,
lies silent in the grave;
when this poor lisping, stammering tongue
lies silent in the grave.