

Jeremiah 13-14

Good evening, Church...

Tonight, we will continue our study of the Book of Jeremiah; we will be in Chapters 13 and 14.

I have a few announcements before we get into it.

Next week is VBS; I hope you have your kids registered.

The event is free, but we need to know how many kids to prepare for... so please get them signed up on our website, the App, or the stations around the campus.

They will have a table set up again over the CM to sign release forms.

Because next week is VBS, we will not have our regular Wednesday Night study.

The Children's Ministry team welcomes you to come and see what they have been doing all week.

So, at our regular time next week, we will still gather, but we will have all the kids here as the sanctuary will be transformed into an underwater adventure.

After the Children's Ministry team sings a few songs with us, there will be a short message, and then we will have the Kona Ice truck here for treats and fellowship. All are welcome.

If you have not been Baptized yet, on Sunday, June 30th, we will have our Church Baptism out here in the courtyard, and we will have a special taco lunch that will be provided following the Baptism.

If you want to be Baptized, the sign-ups are online on the App or at one of the stations here in the Church.

The last thing I want to mention is our Back to School Shoe Drive; we have 100 kids from our community who need help getting shoes for the New School Year.

There are only 11 of us signed up to help those 100 kids.

If you want to join this outreach, please sign up online to help the kids in our community.

You can also call Charlotte in the office to get more details.

So, with that said, let's pray, and we will get into our teaching this morning.

The famous British preacher John Henry Jowett once said, "Preaching that costs nothing accomplishes nothing."¹

Jeremiah knew this better than most.

The sins of the people burdened him; he preached a very unpopular message that centered upon judgment.

He remained steadfast in his calling, even through incredible adversity and pain.

Jeremiah paid a great price to stay faithful to his calling as a prophet of God.

He is an Old Testament picture of what Jesus taught in Matt 16:24-25 "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."

Jeremiah made substantial personal sacrifices with very few tangible results.

¹ John Henry Jowett, *The Preacher, His Life and Work* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1921), 114.

He was often alone, had no recognition, and was rejected.

Tonight, we will glimpse the inner heart of God's man. In these chapters, we are reading the prophet's personal diary.

Look starting at verse 1 with me...

Symbol of the Linen Sash

13:1 Thus the Lord said to me: "Go and get yourself a linen sash, and put it around your waist, but do not put it in water." 2 So I got a sash according to the word of the Lord, and put it around my waist.

3 And the word of the Lord came to me the second time, saying, 4 "Take the sash that you acquired, which is around your waist, and arise, go to the Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole in the rock." 5 So I went and hid it by the Euphrates, as the Lord commanded me.

We now get one of Jeremiah's action sermons here. You have heard the phrase, "A picture is worth more than a thousand words."

God often used pictures to reach the people's imagination and communicate His Truths better.

When people close their ears to the simple spoken Word of God, God would have His prophets live out a parable.

This visual aid attempted to bridge the gap caused by the people's broken attention spans.

And God used strange pictures at times to get the people's attention.

Isaiah walked naked and barefoot for three years as a sign of judgment against Egypt and Ethiopia.

As we will come to later in our studies, Ezekiel will be called to lay on his side.

Hosea is one of the strangest ones, where God called that prophet to marry a harlot.

We saw that Jeremiah was commanded to get a new linen sash here.

Now, this would stand out on the prophet's old garb.

This was not typical attire for a prophet, more for a priest.

This delicate sash would look out of place on this rugged prophet.

Jeremiah's sash represented the intimacy and fellowship that the nation of Judah enjoyed with God.

God tells Jeremiah to take a 300-mile trip with his fancy sash to Babylon.

In Jeremiah's day, caravans traveling westward to Babylon were common.

He was told to hide the sash in a rock by the banks of the Euphrates River, which flowed through Babylon.

Babel, remember, was the place where all false religions stemmed from.

It had been a headquarters for Satan since Nimrod ruled in Genesis Chapter 11.

It is interesting to read in Revelation Chapter 9, **Rev 9:13-15 Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is**

before God, 14 saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." 15 So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind.

So, somewhere, currently in Iraq, waiting for the last days, these mighty fallen angels will be released.

At some point, they were bound up... but maybe they were the original devils that masterminded the demonic worship that has infiltrated almost every culture with its fallen worship.

The names change from culture to culture, but the worship stays the same.

So Jeremiah is sent to where false religions were birthed.

Now we fast forward many days, in verse 6...

6 Now it came to pass after many days that the Lord said to me, "Arise, go to the Euphrates, and take from there the sash which I commanded you to hide there."
7 Then I went to the Euphrates and dug, and I took the

sash from the place where I had hidden it; and there was the sash, ruined. It was profitable for nothing.

God commands Jeremiah to retake the long journey to get his sash back from where he buried it.

There, it was ruined, profitable for nothing.

I am sure this is what Jeremiah expected.

It had deteriorated in the dirt and from the moisture.

None of its previous nobility and prominence was visible any longer.

It could not be restored.

This seems like a lot of work for God to make a point...

But sometimes, to win men's hearts, things must be theatrical to capture their imagination.

Verse 8 now...

8 Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 9 "Thus says the Lord: 'In this manner I will ruin the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. 10 This evil people, who refuse to hear My words, who follow the dictates of their hearts, and walk after other gods to

serve them and worship them, shall be just like this sash which is profitable for nothing. 11 For as the sash clings to the waist of a man, so I have caused the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah to cling to Me,' says the Lord, 'that they may become My people, for renown, for praise, and for glory; but they would not hear.'

As Jeremiah's noble sash was taken to the Euphrates and ruined, so would Judah and Jerusalem be taken to the Euphrates in their coming captivity.

God would ruin the pride of His people.

Pride is the rot that takes out the root of a person.

When people began to think that they were standing well on their own, that they had things all figured out, and they didn't need God as much anymore.

Their roots rot, and soon, that tree comes tumbling down.

Proverbs 16:18-19 Pride goes before destruction,

And a haughty spirit before a fall. 19 Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, Than to divide the spoil with the proud.

At one point, God had a great use for Israel in the world.

But they had so rejected God and become self-sufficient without Him that they had become profitable for nothing.

We see three main sins here mention.

- 1) They refused to hear God's Word
- 2) They followed the Dictates of their own hearts.
- 3) They walked after other gods to serve them.

This is the slippery slope that many find themselves on.

They can even sit in a setting like this, and God's Word will speak, but they refuse to let it impact their lives, following instead their own ideas within their hearts.

And soon, it does not take long before they are following after false ideologies and gods.

In verse 11, God speaks, showing that just as a delicate sash expressed beauty and nobility, God wanted His people to be ornaments of His Glory to all the world.

If they cling to Him, they will be His people for renown, praise, and Glory.

Understand that our chief purpose is to be wrapped around God's waist and a vessel of glory for our God.

Verse 11 ends with, "But they would not hear."

Because of the stubborn and persistent sins against the Lord, Judah did not grab ahold of the incredible destiny that God had planned for them.

They became useless and ruined like a buried sash.

What was true for ancient Israel is true among God's people today.

God's plan today is to make His people a noble decoration of His presence and power.

If we reject this noble calling, we will become useless and miss out on His Great purpose for our lives.

Let's search our hearts tonight to see if we have intimacy and true fellowship with God.

Or, like Judah, has pride crowded God out of our lives.

Have other concerns or pressures taken prominent places in our hearts and minds?

If so, we are in danger of becoming a rotten sash.

Look now at verse 12...

Symbol of the Wine Bottles

12 "Therefore you shall speak to them this word: 'Thus says the Lord God of Israel: "Every bottle shall be filled with wine."'

"And they will say to you, 'Do we not certainly know that every bottle will be filled with wine?'

This expression meant, "It will all turn out well in the end."

This is what the false prophets were promising the people of God.

The people's response here shows their confidence in the principle of their famous proverb.

They believed good times were ahead.

The truth is, God will not fill them with joy but with drunkenness... He is going to bring them into a spiritual stupor.

Verse 13 now...

13 "Then you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord: "Behold, I will fill all the inhabitants of this land — even the kings who sit on David's throne, the priests, the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem — with drunkenness! 14 And I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together," says the Lord. "I will not pity nor spare nor have mercy, but will destroy them."'"

Instead of fulfilling their calling and purpose from God in a high and noble way, they would be filled with stupor and stupidity.

God wanted to break down their fallen ideas, giving them a dose of reality.

If they were bottles, they would be dashed against one another; they have a destiny to be broken.

God promised His rebellious people that they would face the destiny that He laid out for them if they continued in their sins.

God would fill them with the wine of His wrath...

Verse 15 now...

Pride Precedes Captivity

15 Hear and give ear: Do not be proud, For the Lord has spoken. 16 Give glory to the Lord your God Before He causes darkness, And before your feet stumble On the dark mountains, And while you are looking for light, He turns it into the shadow of death And makes it dense darkness.

God now promises that darkness will cover His people; as they reject His light, they will experience dense darkness.

There are three different forms of darkness that we find in the scripture.

In Ephesians, Paul says, **Ephesians 4:18... having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life**

of God, because of the ignorance that is in them,
because of the blindness of their heart.

So, the first darkness is this natural darkness that we are all born under.

We are naturally born sinners, dark from the start...

The second kind of darkness we see in the Scriptures is deliberate darkness.

This Sunday, we will look at it in our text...

John 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

Men and women choose this darkness.

The Light of God exposes our sins and makes us uncomfortable, and people choose to remain in their sin and darkness rather than turn from it.

Now, a third darkness mentioned is a legal darkness, referred to by Jeremiah.

God sentences a rebellious people to stumble into spiritual darkness.

He gives them over to their debased mind...

He says, "You want to go that way, go then."

Paul speaks of the last days, the culmination of this darkness, **2 Thess. 2:11-12 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 12 that they may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.**

They chose darkness rather than light, and God gave them over entirely to that darkness.

Verse 17...

17 But if you will not hear it, My soul will weep in secret for your pride; My eyes will weep bitterly And run down with tears, Because the Lord's flock has been taken captive.

18 Say to the king and to the queen mother, "Humble yourselves; Sit down, For your rule shall collapse, the crown of your glory." 19 The cities of the South shall be shut up, And no one shall open them; Judah shall be carried away captive, all of it; It shall be wholly carried away captive.

The Weeping Prophet's sorrow is evident here.

He was not an outside observer here; his sorrow comes from the reality that his beloved countrymen, the flock of God, will be taken captive.

Jeremiah will feel all the weight of this as well.

He is not throwing thunderbolts of God's Wrath toward Judah from a distance, but he lives amid the people who will be judged.

He pleads with the king and queen, who at this time, according to 2 Kings 24:8-16, is King Jehoiachin, and the queen mother, Nehushta, who only reigned three months before they were taken prisoner in Babylon.

The prophet pleads with them to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God...

If they did not lead in the nation's repentance, the coming fall would impact them the most.

Judah will be carried away, not just in the cities in the North but in the South as well.

Then, he speaks to the king, who is considered a shepherd over the people.

The invaders will steal his beautiful sheep.

Verse 20...

20 Lift up your eyes and see Those who come from the north. Where is the flock that was given to you, Your beautiful sheep? 21 What will you say when He punishes you? For you have taught them To be chieftains, to be head over you. Will not pangs seize you, Like a woman in labor? 22 And if you say in your heart, "Why have these things come upon me?" For the greatness of your iniquity Your skirts have been uncovered, Your heels made bare.

When this promised calamity came upon Judah, they would have no excuse.

Though they were not listening to the prophet, Jeremiah was still faithful in bringing God's Word.

The imagery here is pretty gnarly.

The greatness of their iniquity would cause their skirts to be uncovered, their heels bare.

The idea is unfaithful Judah would be violated and humiliated by their enemies.

They would be exposed like prostitutes for their continual and unashamed adulteries.

They would be publically disgraced.

Then we come to the famous verse 23...

23 Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil.

This is a good question: Can an Ethiopian change the color of his skin?

Of course not...

When we were in the Philippines some years ago, we noticed this skin-whitening lotion at all the stores, and when we inquired about it, we were told it was a marketing ploy for the Filipinos because they desired whiter skin.

Interestingly, all the white people were on their beaches trying to darken their skin.

Everyone was trying to change the color of their skin to try to be like the other...

But like the leopard spots, our skin color cannot change permanently.

I might add that the color of our skin, no matter what it is, is a mark of beauty, as God has given it to us.

But here, the following question goes with the first, "Can a man do good who is accustomed to doing evil?"

And again, the answer is "No."

We cannot change our skin; a leopard cannot change its spots.

And you and I cannot change our nature; we were born into sin.

We are sinners at heart.

Jeremiah will say later on in **Jer. 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?"**

One translation is that it is "incurably wicked."

There is nothing within me that can change me.

I cannot reform myself...

I can change my actions for a time, I can change my habits, but I cannot change my sinful nature.

I need a new nature altogether.

This is what it means to be born again.

The only hope for genuine change comes from God's Spirit.

He removes our rebellious heart and gives us a heart of obedience.

Only when we come to faith in Jesus can we be born again.

This Sunday, we will read Jesus's own Words on the matter.

Verse 24 now...

24 "Therefore I will scatter them like stubble That passes away by the wind of the wilderness. 25 This is your lot, The portion of your measures from Me," says the Lord, "Because you have forgotten Me And trusted in falsehood. 26 Therefore I will uncover your skirts

over your face, That your shame may appear. 27 I have seen your adulteries And your lustful neighings, The lewdness of your harlotry, Your abominations on the hills in the fields. Woe to you, O Jerusalem! Will you still not be made clean?"

Again, this is how they shamed prostitutes by pulling skirts over their faces.

Here, Jeremiah is exposing the harlotry of God's people.

Judah betrayed the Lord and slept with idols.

Like an animal in heat, the people pursued lewd and lustful desires.

God pronounces a Woe or Judgment on Jerusalem because even with the warnings, they still have no desire to be clean.

Let's move into Chapter 14 now, which introduces a new section...

Verse 1...

Sword, Famine, and Pestilence

14:1 The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah concerning the droughts.

In many of the mighty empires of the time, Egypt, Babylon, and Mesopotamia, the land was fed by Great Rivers.

The Nile ran through Egypt, and the Euphrates watered the East.

But the Hebrews had to rely on their God for rain in Canaan, the Promised Land.

The region depended upon two rain seasons, in the former and latter seasons or spring and fall.

When the people disobeyed God, He would withhold the rain; when they walked in obedience, God blessed the land with plenty of rain.

The Lord would use drought seasons to get ahold of His people, to humble them to a place that would bring them back to Him.

The drought here was no doubt a judgment of God.

Verse 2...

2 "Judah mourns, And her gates languish; They mourn for the land, And the cry of Jerusalem has gone up. 3 Their nobles have sent their lads for water; They went to the cisterns and found no water. They returned with their vessels empty; They were ashamed and confounded And covered their heads. 4 Because the ground is parched, For there was no rain in the land, The plowmen were ashamed; They covered their heads. 5 Yes, the deer also gave birth in the field, But left because there was no grass. 6 And the wild donkeys stood in the desolate heights; They sniffed at the wind like jackals; Their eyes failed because there was no grass."

7 O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, Do it for Your name's sake; For our backslidings are many, We have sinned against You.

They were not just guilty of a one-time backsliding; their backslidings were many.

They were living in a constant state of backsliding.

And here, we see, Jeremiah begins a prayer campaign on their behalf...

Also, Jeremiah does not point his finger at their backsliding, but he states, "Our backslidings."

"We have backslidden, Lord."

Jeremiah loved his countrymen so much that he saw himself as one of them.

The prophet stays so loyal to his people that he identifies with them through thick and thin, not only in the good but in the bad.

Jesus did this in the greater sense, as He identified with fallen man and bore the sins of many... So Jeremiah, in the lesser sense, bears the burden of sin and takes responsibility.

If there is any hope for our nation to turn around, this is a good starting place.

The Church has to own up to its part in the fall of this nation.

We are good at pointing fingers at them, blaming them, looking down upon others.

But we are told in **1 Peter 4:17** For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

We must include ourselves in the problem if there will be a true Revival in the Land.

Jeremiah did not push off the blame.

Verse 8...

8 O the Hope of Israel, his Savior in time of trouble,
Why should You be like a stranger in the land, And like
a traveler who turns aside to tarry for a night? 9 Why
should You be like a man astonished, Like a mighty one
who cannot save? Yet You, O Lord, are in our midst,
And we are called by Your name; Do not leave us!

Jeremiah gives us a wonderful name for our God in this very dark hour of Israel's history.

He is the Hope of Israel.

Church, He is our hope as well... God is our Savior in times of Trouble...

There is always hope when we are looking to our God.

Verse 10...

10 Thus says the Lord to this people:

"Thus they have loved to wander; They have not restrained their feet. Therefore the Lord does not accept them; He will remember their iniquity now, And punish their sins."

11 Then the Lord said to me, "Do not pray for this people, for their good."

We see again that God instructs Jeremiah not to pray for these people, at least not for their good.

Judgment was inevitable, and praying for the nation of Judah was pointless.

Verse 12...

12 When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I will not

accept them. But I will consume them by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence."

As we mentioned last week, God's patience does have a limit.

I don't know where that line is nor want to push the limits to find out where God's Grace does not reach.

We see that God will not wait on a person forever, and the door of opportunity will shut at some point.

What a terrible thought, a terrible place for anyone to be in... When the opportunity is lost... and the heart hardens into eternity.

So Jeremiah is told not to pray, and the people are told their worship will not be accepted... what will the prophet do now?

Verse 13...

13 Then I said, "Ah, Lord God! Behold, the prophets say to them, 'You shall not see the sword, nor shall you have famine, but I will give you assured peace in this place.'"

14 And the Lord said to me, "The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart. 15 Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who prophesy in My name, whom I did not send, and who say, 'Sword and famine shall not be in this land' — 'By sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed! 16 And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword; they will have no one to bury them — them nor their wives, their sons nor their daughters — for I will pour their wickedness on them.'

Jeremiah will be validated in the end.

The prophets prophesying smooth things will be taken by famine and the sword.

I wish the lying prophets with smooth and easy messages were only a problem in Jeremiah's day.

But they are still out there in abundance today.

So many preachers promise prosperity and blessing, using obscure passages and saying, “Thus sayeth the Lord.”

Can you imagine Noah’s message as he was going up the ramp of the Ark? “God wants you to have your best life now.”

“Or pray this every day when you wake up, and God will bless your life.”

Can we see anywhere, really, where prosperity and blessings in the New Testament were promised to the Church?

No, take up your cross is the true mantra of this Age. We are to give ourselves away...

So many false messengers play into the carnal desires of the Church, putting the material things above the spiritual.

John the Baptist was not murdered for telling people, “God just wants to bless you; all you have to do is believe it, open your hands, and He will pour it out.”

When he was hung upside down on a cross and crucified for his faith, Peter was not preaching health and wealth to his listeners.

No, these messengers of God were preaching, "Repent from your sins."

We need messengers today who are unafraid to stand for truth at all costs, as Jeremiah did.

Verse 17...

17 "Therefore you shall say this word to them:

'Let my eyes flow with tears night and day, And let them not cease; For the virgin daughter of my people Has been broken with a mighty stroke, with a very severe blow. 18 If I go out to the field, Then behold, those slain with the sword! And if I enter the city, Then behold, those sick from famine! Yes, both prophet and priest go about in a land they do not know.'"

We see the Weeping Prophet's tears flowing once again... as he grieves for his people.

Billy Graham once said, "Tears shed for self are tears of weakness, but tears shed for others are a sign of

strength.” This was true of Jeremiah. He’s called the weeping prophet for his tears over the nation.²

Think about the last time tears came from your face... was it for yourself or for the lost condition of those around you?

Does it grieve you that your loved ones will go to hell if they do not repent and turn to Jesus?

Look now at verse 19... We see Jeremiah was asked not to pray... But he does anyway... this is the only thing he can think to do in his grief....

The People Plead for Mercy

19 Have You utterly rejected Judah? Has Your soul loathed Zion? Why have You stricken us so that there is no healing for us? We looked for peace, but there was no good; And for the time of healing, and there was trouble. 20 We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness And the iniquity of our fathers, For we have sinned against You. 21 Do not abhor us, for Your name's sake; Do not disgrace the throne of Your glory. Remember,

² <https://www.sandyadams.org/sermon/jeremiah-13-15/>

do not break Your covenant with us. 22 Are there any among the idols of the nations that can cause rain? Or can the heavens give showers? Are You not He, O Lord our God? Therefore we will wait for You, Since You have made all these.

In his sorrow, Jeremiah has forgotten that the curses were as much a part of God's Covenant with Israel as were the blessings.

In judging them, God will fulfill promises as if He blessed the people.

Jeremiah asked if God had cast off His people for good. Interestingly, Jeremiah is disobeying God here in praying for the people.

What else can love do when even the door to prayer is closed...?

The only answer is to move closer to the throne of Grace and keep pleading.

Take note of how Jeremiah prays, though.

He is not coming to the Lord on behalf of the people based on what they have done for God.

He is coming to God in truth, “We have sinned against You.”

Jeremiah sees nothing good in them upon which to appeal to God, so Jeremiah comes to God based on God’s Name.

Jeremiah looks to the attributes of God, the basis of His Rule and Authority.

His ground of reasoning here is looking past this Old Covenant of the Law to One of Grace.

Jeremiah is looking for God to help and bless based on who God is and what He has done.

God alone can determine the seasons of rain. He alone can bring the healing needed.

At the end of Jeremiah’s prayer, he concludes, “Therefore we will wait for You.”

We see a humbled surrender and submission in the prophet, simply relying on his God.

Have you come to a difficult season tonight?

Have you found yourself in trouble?

Maybe you have dug yourself into a pit deeper than you have ever been before.

Maybe it seems like heaven is silent when you pray...

I think the message for you tonight is to continue, press into the throne room of Grace, and wait upon the Lord patiently.

I think of Peter's reply to Jesus when many of the disciples began to leave Jesus because the words that He was speaking were too difficult for them to believe.

John 6:67-68 Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" 68 But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

Where else can we go, but to keep pressing in?

He alone has the words of eternal life.

Wherever you are tonight, whatever has come upon your life, draw closer to Him...