

**Jeremiah 36: 1-32 – “Jehoiakim’s Burning the Scroll”, Sermon # 42 in the series –
“Heart Lessons Learned for a Prophet and the People of God”,
Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on August 18th, 2019,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

It’s now been 22 years since Jeremiah was called to be a prophet of the Lord. He has been given many messages and preached many sermons to the people of Judah and Jerusalem. No doubt there was a remnant of believers who responded in repentance and faith to the messages preached, but the vast majority of the nation were unresponsive. We could say that they were even indifferent. But Jeremiah did not stop preaching when he did not see the results that he was praying for. And God gave him here at this time a very direct way to speak the king and all the princes of Israel, even though he was confined and could not go into the house of the Lord. He had Baruch take dictation from him, and then at the right time, he had Baruch take it to them and read it to them. We should see from this, in terms of our own evangelism, that sometimes what one method will not accomplish, another method under God’s good hand, may.

The words of the Lord, written down, are called the Scriptures. The Scriptures are the written revelation of God; of His will and of His ways, and they convey to us and to all men, what God expects of us. The words of God were delivered to the prophets, to give to His people and others who did not know God, the revelation of His will. They speak to us of what has happened and what will happen, in the history of redemption. The history of redemption is the history of God’s saving a people for Himself. For our purposes this morning – The words of the Lord, written down in a book, are God’s standing witness to what He expects of all men, and how He will act toward them in mercy and judgment. The Scriptures are God’s standing witness of His righteous character and His expectations in 3 important ways, as they relate to His mercy and His judgment.

1st of all – The Scriptures are a standing witness to the fact that God is a Judge and He expects all people to repent. (verses 1-8)

Jeremiah had faithfully preached the words of the Lord to the people of Judah from the days of Josiah on, but now we see that many spoken words of the prophet had been ignored, despised, or forgotten. You would think that God would have had enough of these people and that He would simply destroy them. But look at verse 3. God says – “It may be that the house of Israel will hear all the adversities which I purpose to bring upon them, that everyone may turn from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.” Although these words may seem to cast doubt on God’s prescience, His ability to know all things, and see the outcome of all of His dealings with men; it simply is not so. By the way that God is speaking here, you might think that people have the ability to repent on their own, apart from His grace, and purposed favor. But it is not so. Rather, God in our passage, is exercising patience in order that these guilty sinners will have no excuse for their remaining in their sin.

He had spoken to them through Jeremiah, over and over again, but they would not listen. You will say to me – Well evidently they were not of God’s elect. Yes, that may not have been the case, but that is not how the passage reads. And we can further say that Jeremiah would not have known, as he preached to them, which of them was elect and which was not elect. And so, what we need to consider in relation to these words, was that God was still exercising great patience toward them. And so, He would have a book written; a book which would be a standing witness of His patience towards this sinful people. We may be sure, from other portions of Scripture that God does have an elect people. He knows those whom He has chosen from before the foundation of the world. But what we need to see from this passage, is that God has a will of

desire that everyone may turn from their evil way in order that He might forgive their iniquity and their sin.

This is called repentance, and God expects repentance of all people, not only in terms of a person's conversion to Christ, but He is also looking for repentance in relation to the Christian's ongoing daily life in His sight. It was Martin Luther in the 1st of his 95 theses that said – "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent' (in Matthew 4: 17), He willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance." And further, we should remember, that the Lord Jesus also said in Luke 13: 5 – "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish". He was speaking in that context, to his disciples, the 12 included. And in this same regard, I believe that this is also the reason that Jesus wept over Jerusalem, over non-elect sinners who would not listen or heed his preaching. And it is also the reason why preachers will sometimes plead with sinners and cry over people whom they perceive are not listening. They are resisting the word which is faithfully being delivered to them. The preacher is an ambassador for Christ, as though God were pleading through him, it says in 2nd Corinthians 5: 20 – "Be reconciled to God".

God is perfectly opposed to sin because He sees that it is the sinner's attempt to undermine His good government of the world, and His good government of them. The sinner says – I think that I know better than God. I do not think I need the knowledge of His ways. I am satisfied with mine. But God sees what sin does to you, to destroy your life. And He also knows what He has to do about sin! He must eventually deal with it. He must judge it, and He will punish it, but He would also show forth His mercy to sinners through having His prophet preach His word to these resistant people. God is so patient as to give these people a book, wherein is recorded His perfect, holy, and loving will. He says – Turn from your sins and you will live! For great is the anger and fury that the Lord that has been pronounced against those who will cleave to their sin. This is why God had to send His only-begotten Son into the world. It was so you might be saved.

What is sin, anyway? Sin is any transgression of God's holy law as it is found summarized for us in the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments give us the overview of what sin is. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make a graven image or likeness of God to worship it. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. You shall remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. You shall honor your father and your mother. You shall not kill, you shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness or lie. And you shall not covet anything which belongs to your neighbor. Now all of those commandments are summed up by the two greatest commandments. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And you shall love your neighbor as yourself. It is by the law that the knowledge of what sin is, comes to you.

Let me ask if you believe that you have kept all of these good commandments? If you say, "yes", you are fooling yourself very much, for God's commandment is exceedingly broad and extensive in a holy and perfect way. The commandments of God were given by God to show us the perfection of His being; specifically His righteousness. They show us the perfection which is necessary for any person to be accepted by Him. But since the beginning of the world, and the entrance of sin into the world through Adam's sin, we all come into this world with sin in our very nature. And it does not take long, even for a little child to begin to say "no" to his parents, and even to God Himself. No, I will not keep your commandments God! Therefore, there is a need for all preachers to preach the law, and to preach repentance. It is so that we will not deceive ourselves into thinking that we are good enough, in ourselves, to enter heaven and to live with God forever. We should understand that we are only able to please God here upon the earth, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is because He is the perfect Man, whom God sent to be the Savior of the World.

This truth is for all men; that we all must repent and turn from our sin to God. Since all people are sinners, you should understand that this message is for you – What will you say to God; what will you do? Will you turn from your sins; from your pride, from your self-sufficiency, from your self-righteousness, from your unloving, unkind, self-serving ways of thinking and doing things, and ask the Lord to forgive your iniquity? God stands waiting to see what you will do. He patiently strives with you by His Spirit. Will you cry out to Him? Sometimes people are religious sinners, like these people were. They grow up going to church, and occasionally they think about the message that is preached to them, but they do not really think that it applies to them. They believe that they are pretty good people just as they are. They do not believe that they need to be converted to Christ. They think that knowing God is a matter of their own opinions, rather than their believing and receiving God's word. They may read many other books, but the Bible they will not read.

Why are they this way? Because they believe that true religion is a matter of love without judgment. They have a hard time believing that the loving God is the judge of all men. They believe that God is perfect love, and so, since this is true, even though they may understand that the Bible is God's word, they will only receive those parts of it which speak of His love and His mercy. They believe that since God loves all men, He would never punish any person for their sins. They believe that God accepts all people just as they are, in spite of their sins, and in their sins. And so they wrongly conclude that God will not be the judge of all men.

They disbelieve the idea that God will evaluate all men on the Day of Judgment, based upon their works; that is, what they did while they lived here upon the earth. Perhaps they believe in the verse which is found in John 3: 17 – “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” What a glorious verse this is! My own father was converted to Christ by reading a sermon of Charles Spurgeon's on this text of Scripture. The truth of it gives encouragement to every sinner to come to Christ, because that is why Christ came into the world – to save sinners. He did not come to call the righteous, but sinners unto repentance. He did not come to condemn when He came the first time into the world. He came to lay down His life as a sacrifice for sins and for sinners.

But let us receive the truth today; that God is also a righteous judge as well, and that He has committed all judgment to His Son. John 5: 20-23 – “For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.” “For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.” “For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father.” “He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.” I hope that you can see here that not only the Father is a Judge, but the Son is also. Indeed, the Father has committed all judgment to the Son, so that people would honor the Lord Jesus in the very same way that they honor the Father; with obedience, worship, and living their lives in godly fear, to Him as well as to the Father.

Do you remember how the apostle Paul preached to the Athenians about God's judging the world? Well listen to how he related it to them. Acts 17, verses 29-31 – “Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.” “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now *He* commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained.” “He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.” So, the Scriptures are very clear, that the Lord Jesus will be the judge of the world at the Last Day, and that is why you should repent and believe in Him. It is because God has made provision for you to be saved, if you will believe in Him.

2nd – The Scriptures are a standing witness of the power of our God, to awaken people and to strive with them over their sins. (verses 9-19)

A fast had been proclaimed for the day when Baruch read from the book in the house of the Lord. The Lord chose the best, the most opportune time to have His word presented. It was now being read again a 2nd time in public, in the 5th year, in the 9th month, on another one of the fast days. The 1st reading had taken place in the 4th year on the Day of Atonement. In fasting, people put themselves in a great state of natural humility, and of all times humanly speaking, they are in a better position to take heed to spiritual things. It says in verse 10 that Baruch read from the upper court at the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house, in the hearing of all the people. We should understand from this that even a sermonic message which is read may be used in the Lord's hand to do great things. Baruch appears to have been the right man for the job. The words of the Scripture were no doubt read by him in a faithful, lively, and declarative way. He knew that he was reading in the presence and sight of the living God, whose eye was upon him. He read them prayerfully to the people in the hope that they would listen and receive them. People are saved by hearing the word of God; even when it is being read.

It is very important, not only that God's word be read to people, but it is also important how it is read. Baruch knew that it should be read with all the grace and feeling that he could muster. God must have blessed his reading because one man, Michaiah, took it to heart, and was awakened it says in verses 1-13. He went down to the king's house, and into the scribe's chamber, where all the princes were sitting, and he declared to them all the words that he had heard when Baruch read the book. By the way, it is indeed a very profitable thing to repeat what we have heard read, and preached to us. When this is done, it will often awaken interest in other people as well. When the princes heard of the judgments of the Lord coming, and of their need to repent, they called for Baruch to come to them. They sent Jehudi to get him, and to have him bring the scroll with him to read to them. (verse 15) "Sit down now, and read it in our hearing," they say.

By way of application – It is possible to be awakened to your own sinfulness and the coming judgment, and yet still not take action to repent. But our duty as Christians, who know the word, and would convey the word to others, should remember that all people need to hear the word and to repent. And so we will share the truth. And we will do what we can by His grace to attempt to win those who hear. But how important it is, to spread the message of the gospel and the word of God, near and far, in order for us to be workers together with God. We have a responsibility to read the Bible to our children and other family members every day. And even if they do not respond in repentance and by placing their faith in Christ, we will continue to read. Read them good books, yes, but read them the Bible even more! How eternally significant is the reading of the words of God! We do well to engage in it; to read it out loud to each other, to speak about what we have read, and to act upon what is read. This is God's way!

Verse 16 says – "Now it happened, when they had heard all the words, that they looked in fear from one to another, and said to Baruch, 'We will surely tell the king of all these words'. They felt the force of truth. But let us understand, that a person may be awakened from the sleep of spiritual death and yet still not do the right thing. The right thing is to inquire – What must I do to be saved? They said that they would tell the king and certainly the king needed to hear. But their decisions to consider the words of God should never have been based simply on the reaction of their king. And your decision to repent and believe must not be based upon whether your brother or sister or friend or leader of your community, or nation, is going to do it, or has done it. You are to repent because God commands it, and because God has said that this is what should be done. It is His authority that you are to have respect to; the authority of His words.

You will notice that they also became more interested in how Baruch wrote down these words, rather than in taking heed to their own souls in relation to the words. Verse 17 says – “Tell us now, how did you write all these words – at his instruction? They wanted to know, and certainly they did need to know this; that this word was truly from God. And so do we. Let us understand, that this book the Bible, is inspired by God in the original manuscripts. God’s word came to holy men of old, as they were moved and carried along by the Holy Spirit, to write down exactly what God intended. And so, we do not need to be overly anxious about the fact that men wrote it down. Men may make mistakes, but God never does. And God was well able to preserve what He wanted said, even though a man was writing it down.

God knew perfectly well, how to give His prophet His word; depositing His precious word in his mind of the one writing; moving in the will of His prophet so that he would bring it forth or write it down at God’s bidding, so that it was God’s very word which was spoken or written down, when he delivered it to the people. And yet, the prophet’s personality and style were also preserved in the writing! I am saying, God was well able to do this. “No prophecy ever came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke (and wrote) as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” The Scripture is of no one’s private interpretation. It is God’s open declaration. Will you not receive it as such today, and read it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God which effectively works in you who believe.

3rd – The words of the Lord written down are a standing witness of God’s Faithfulness to preserve His word. (verses 20-32)

“And they went to the king, into the court; but they stored the scroll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, and told all the words in the hearing of the king.” “So the king sent Jehudi to bring the scroll, and he took it from Elishama the scribe’s chamber.” “And Jehudi read it in the hearing of the king and in the hearing of all the princes who stood beside the king.” Now I want you to notice that all the fears of the princes concerning God’s judging them, led them to Jehoiakim the king, instead of bringing them to God first. I suppose that in one sense this could be considered righteous. It is always good to take matters of supreme importance in relation to the continuance of our country, to our leaders in government. In one respect, this is good, but it is only good if those who are taking their concerns to the leader are themselves wise people, or people who want to be made wise through the Scriptures. But in this case, it proved to be a very sad day for Jerusalem and Judah.

These princes brought the scroll to the king. And the king was sitting there in the winter house, it says in verse 22, with a fire burning on the hearth before him. And when the scroll of the book was read to him, he cut it up and threw it in the fire. He might as well have thrown himself in fire after it. Instead of his tearing his heart or his garments, he destroyed the written message. It says in verse 23 that “after Jehudi had read three or four columns, that the king cut it with the scribe’s knife and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the scroll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth”. “Yet they were not afraid, nor did they tear their garments.” In other words, there was no fear of God before their eyes! And so there was no holy fear in their minds and hearts. Some of them were antagonistic to God’s word when they saw that king Jehoiakim was antagonistic to it. This leads me to ask – What should we do when those in government want to burn or get rid of the words of God? If we have faith in God and in the promises of His word, we need to plead with them not to do wickedly.

In verse 25 it says – “Nevertheless Elnathan, Delaiah, and Gemariah implored the king not to burn the scroll; but he would not listen to them. So, we see that these men entered their protest publicly before the king. They implored the king not to burn the scroll. This was the right thing to do, and it is what we should do to take our stand to do, when and if, similar circumstances come to pass in the life of our nation. Let us realize, that when the message of our needing to repent comes to us, it is incumbent that we ourselves respond to it immediately, no

matter what anyone else in governmental authority might say or do in order to promote it, or to refuse it. It is a very sad thing, when people are more interested in seeing what the leader or leaders in government want to do, in relation to the preaching of the Scriptures, instead of seeing that their salvation is a matter of their personally repenting of their own sins and coming to Christ, immediately, when they hear of God's command to repent.

Let me apply it in this way; if you put off your own repentance until you see how others in government, or others of your friends, react to the words of God, you may never come. You may be thinking of worldly men or your friends as the ones who you need to please. But I plead with you now, do not be deceived. God's will in His word are your ultimate authority for how you are to live and what you are to do. I hope that you will remember that it is only those who do the will of God who will abide forever. The fear of men is a snare. Only fools despise the wisdom and instruction of the Scriptures. In closing this message, I want you to remember that the doing of the will of God in accordance with the word of God is the most important thing that you will ever do in this life. Repent and keep on repenting where you need to every day. It will show your faithfulness to God if you will abide in the word and live your life to Him by obedience to His word.

If a persecuting authority comes, and destroys your copy of the Scriptures, know that God is well able to preserve His word, and He will see to it that you will be able to obtain another copy if they destroy yours. And remember too, that the Lord is able to hide you in times of trouble, if need be. Verse 26 says – "And the king commanded Jerahmeel the king's son, Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdel, to seize Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet, but the Lord hid them." Psalm 31: 19 says – "Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You, which You have prepared for those who trust in You in the presence of the sons of men!" "You shall hide them in the secret place of Your presence from the plots of man; You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." He did this for Jeremiah and Baruch, and He can do it for you.