

Something New for a Sinful Nation

By Don Green

sermonaudio.com

Bible Verse: Jeremiah 30-33
Preached on: Sunday, October 11, 2020

Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

What we've been doing over the past couple of weeks is just taking a brief survey through the book of Jeremiah because we believe that it has things to say to us that would help us discern the times in which we live and to respond properly to the times in which we live. God called Jeremiah to be a prophet to a sinful nation.

The title of today's message is that there is "Something New for a Sinful Nation." Something new for a sinful nation, and as we surveyed Jeremiah last time, what we saw, we saw four key themes in what was being expressed and what the book talks about. First of all, we saw that God is sovereign over everything that happens in the nations. He is sovereign. He has not lost control. He had not lost control when his people rebelled against him. He had not lost control when a nation came down upon them. He was orchestrating and moving all of these things to accomplish his own holy purposes. And so God is sovereign in the midst of everything that happens. We saw that the reason that judgment was coming upon them was because of their own sinfulness. They were guilty of profound spiritual adultery. They had turned away from the living God to serve idols. They had embraced and loved false prophets and false teaching even though they knew that these things were deceitful. They loved the deception of it all, not unlike our day.

So there was judgment coming for the sin of the people and what we saw at the end of last time was that there was a promise of God. We saw multiple multiple times that God said, "I will restore your fortunes." And so there's this strange juxtaposition, you might say. On the one hand God says judgment is coming because of your sin, and yet on the other hand he's saying I will restore your fortunes. In other words, and we saw the prophecy where Jeremiah said that the exile was going to last for 70 years, there was judgment coming in the form of a 70 year exile and after that at some point in the future after that, there would be a restoration of their fortunes, and we didn't really discuss that too clearly last time, we didn't expand on it, I hope to do some of that here today.

What we want to see just to kind of refresh your mind and to see things in the language of Scripture, turn to Jeremiah 5:15. Jeremiah 5:15. This is by way of brief, every so brief review. Jeremiah 5, God has been rebuking the false prophets, beginning in verse 14 it says, "thus says the LORD, the God of hosts, 'Because you have spoken this word, Behold, I am making My words in your mouth fire And this people wood, and it will consume them.'" He is giving power and he is giving prophecy to Jeremiah to speak to

the people and here's what he is to tell them in verse 15, he says, "Behold," this is God speaking, "I am bringing a nation against you from afar, O house of Israel," declares the LORD. 'It is an enduring nation, It is an ancient nation, A nation whose language you do not know, Nor can you understand what they say.'" God in the context of judging them for their sin tells them what form the discipline is going to take place. He is going to bring a foreign nation with a foreign language upon them. They will invade, they will conquer, they will send Israel off into exile, all of this for their spiritual adultery. God does not tolerate sin. There is not to be sin openly named and embraced among his people. We've seen that already this morning. God is holy and he tells his people in Scripture repeatedly, "You shall be holy for I am holy." And when a people refuses the holiness of God and pursues a path of sin, there are consequences. God brings judgment. He brings discipline and it is a sobering thing to recognize when it happens.

So we ask this question here this morning: why was it, looking back in Jeremiah's day, why was it that a people that had been delivered from slavery in Egypt by God and brought into a land of their own, why was it that they rebelled against him? He had led them through the wilderness. He had dispossessed nations so that they could have that land flowing with milk and honey. Why was it that they were not joyful and thankful and worshipful to him in response to that? Well, we're going to see that here this morning. I'm going to give you three different sections of Jeremiah to consider here this morning and, again, we're treating things in a somewhat thematic way to have a grasp of the book without trying to go through all of it verse by verse.

We see, first of all, the problem of the old heart. The problem of the old heart. Why do men sin stubbornly against God when they are violating the testimony of their own conscience? They see God revealed in Scripture, they are without excuse. Why is it that Israel in their day rebelled against God and forsook the God who had delivered them and brought them into this wonderful place? Why is it today that men sin stubbornly against God? Why is it that we see such chaos and violence and an open embrace of sin in our own nation today? These facts are undeniable. You cannot deny that that is what is happening. As I've said in other places, our nation entertains itself with sin against every one of the 10 Commandments. This is what we entertain ourselves with. Why is that when God is so good and gracious and loving? When God has made himself known in Christ, why do men rebel against him like that to their own destruction?

We need an answer to that question if we are to understand the world around us, if we are to understand what is happening in our own day. And let me just answer the question plainly and simply because it's really not that difficult. Men and women sin stubbornly against God because they have an evil heart. Men sin stubbornly against God because they have an evil heart. Man is not basically good. You need to disabuse yourself of that notion that is propagated by a self-loving generation that loves itself and wants to think of itself as good. You cannot think that and believe that when you read the Bible, as we're going to see so plainly. This is a universal problem. It has been that way since the fall of Adam. It was because the heart turned evil in that fall that Cain was able to kill his brother having evil in his heart, and what God does in Jeremiah is he brings this to the attention of the people many many many many times and I just want to give you a flavor

for how much this is emphasized in the book of Jeremiah. Their judgment, their exile was coming upon them because of their own sin, not because of any evil intent, not because of any unfairness of God, and certainly not because God had lost control of the situation. God was sovereign in it all. God was unfolding his eternal plan in it all. And so you can't say that things are happening because God has lost control, he's in perfect control. Well, then why is it that men suffer under the consequences of his discipline and his sin? Why don't they simply repent? It's because they have an evil heart.

Jeremiah 5:23. We'll look at five or six passages here. In Jeremiah 5:23 God says, "this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart; They have turned aside and departed. They do not say in their heart, 'Let us now fear the LORD our God, Who gives rain in its season, Both the autumn rain and the spring rain, Who keeps for us The appointed weeks of the harvest.'" They do not say that, instead what has happened in verse 25, "Your iniquities have turned these away, And your sins have withheld good from you."

In chapter 7, verse 23, speaking about that prior generation that was delivered from Egypt, God reminds the people in Jeremiah's day some 800-900 years later what he had said to this people when they were delivered from slavery, and in verse 23 he says this, "this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you will be My people; and you will walk in all the way which I command you, that it may be well with you.'" Obedience leading to blessing. Verse 24, "Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but they walked in their own counsels and in the stubbornness of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward. Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have sent you all My servants the prophets, daily rising early and sending them. Yet they did not listen to Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck; they did more evil than their fathers." Look at what God says there. What God tells them is, "They did not obey Me. They walked in the stubbornness of their own evil heart." But God didn't just immediately judge them when they made that turn. For centuries God sent his servants the prophets to preach to them, to call them to repentance, to remind them of the goodness and the covenant of God, and yet they did not listen even though they had that daily word in their ears.

There is no excuse. There is no excuse. Let no man under the sound of my voice think that God was hasty and just angry and wrathful because that's the way the God of the Old Testament was. No, no, the problem in the Old Testament is the same as the problem in the New. Men are sinful people with evil hearts that reject him despite his grace. God had graciously delivered this nation from Egypt, he had graciously placed them in a new land, he had graciously protected them from their enemies, he had graciously promised them blessing upon blessing if they would simply heed his voice and be his people, and what did they do as a nation? They thumbed their nose at him. They rejected that. They said, as it were, "We will not have you reign over us." What a profound insult to the holiness of God that his own people would do that. Is a holy God supposed to simply pass over that and act like nothing had happened? To act like his people were actually loving him when they weren't? When they were pursuing falsehood when they knew and had the God of truth over them? No. The problem is not God here, and just like today the problem is not God here in our country. The problem is the wickedness of the people that live within our

borders. That is why we see chaos and violence and all of these things that are coming down upon us. That is why you see all of the deception that is at work in our society. It's because the men are evil. These things don't come from good, holy, righteous hearts. There's no other conclusion to draw.

Look at Jeremiah 9:13. And all I'm doing in this section of the message is just helping you see the theme and how often it is repeated. It is easy when you're reading one of these big Old Testament prophets to lose sight of the themes as you work through the details, and it's easy to miss the repetition that takes place. That's the weakness that I'm trying to address in handling this material in this way so that you see the themes, and the repetition of it helps you see that I'm not blowing out of proportion one single verse in one single passage, this dominates, this dominates the whole book of Jeremiah. Chapter 9, verse 13, "The LORD said, 'Because they have forsaken My law which I set before them, and have not obeyed My voice nor walked according to it, but have walked after the stubbornness of their heart and after the Baals, as their fathers taught them,' therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, 'behold, I will feed them, this people, with wormwood and give them poisoned water to drink. I will scatter them among the nations, whom neither they nor their fathers have known; and I will send the sword after them until I have annihilated them.'"

Chapter 11, verse 8, actually starting in verse 7, "For I solemnly warned your fathers in the day that I brought them up from the land of Egypt, even to this day, warning persistently, saying, 'Listen to My voice.' Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked, each one, in the stubbornness of his evil heart; therefore I brought on them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but they did not." You can go back and read Deuteronomy 28 and see what God is alluding to there, promises of blessing if they would obey, promises of curses if they did not.

And finally a more familiar passage to those of us in our day in Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds."

Beloved, here's what I want you to see from that brief survey of five or six texts there, is that the people in Jeremiah's day were irreversibly disposed against God. They were irreversibly disposed against their own God and watch the consequences of this. Let me just summarize the consequences of this because it has far-reaching implications for our own day today. Those people did not keep God's law. They could not keep God's law. They did not have the ability to do so because their heart was evil and stubborn. Not only did they not keep it, not only could they not keep it, they did not even want to keep it. They were doing what they wanted as they pursued their false gods and their spiritual adultery. The problem in Jeremiah's day, the problem in our day is that men have evil stubborn hearts that are disposed against God. They have no affection for him. They do not want him. They do not desire to submit to him and as a result, we find the consequences of pursuing darkness enveloping us. Israel saw the consequences starting to envelop them, they were warned in advance, what we see in our nation today is we see

the consequences of evil hearts, a collective evil heart enveloping us around what we are going through. In other words, today our nation has the same problem because we are filled with hundreds of millions of people who have an evil heart disposed against the holy God of the Bible, that are disposed against Jesus Christ and disposed against the Gospel that would save them from their sin.

You see, my friends, this is fundamental to understand that the heart of man hates God. For all that he wants to be thought about as being a good person, at root in his heart men hate God. Look at Romans 3. Let's put a New Testament turn on this so that you can see that nothing has changed. I could see someone saying, "Well, you were just talking about one nation in the Old Testament and that has no application to today. Things are different today. Don't you know that we've evolved into higher creatures and we walk at a higher moral level today." No. No. We're stuck in the same mud. Humanity has been spinning its tires in mud since Jeremiah's day for 2,500 years and we're in the exact same place of having an evil wicked heart against God.

Now you're familiar with this text but I want you to see it again in light of the things that we've said here this morning. The Apostle Paul quoting from the Old Testament says in chapter 3, verse 9, "What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; as it is written, 'There is none righteous, not even one.' Not even one. Not even one. 'There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; All have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one. Their throat is an open grave, with their tongues they keep deceiving, The poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; Their feet are swift to shed blood, destruction and misery are in their paths, and the path of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." That is a universal condemnation of the entire human race, Jews and Greeks, Jews and Gentiles alike, and the point that Paul is making here at this point in Romans, he says in verse 19, "Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin."

Look over at Romans 8. Romans 8:6, "the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh," that is, unregenerate man, "is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

Beloved, what this means is there is no human answer for the dilemma that we face in our country because the problems that we see, the violence and the deception that are at every strata of society, this is born out of a heart of wickedness, evil stubbornness against God and against the Gospel in such a way that it is irreversible by human powers. This is impossible in the sight of men to correct. It doesn't matter in terms of what we're talking about right now, it does not matter who the next President is. It doesn't matter who controls Congress next. This problem they cannot fix. You cannot legislate your way out of spiritual anarchy, spiritual deadness. You cannot legislate your way out of a stubborn

evil heart. You already have the law and it doesn't change. We do not have the power to change ourselves and that is the problem that the nation of Judah was facing in Jeremiah's day, it's the same problem today. That's what we need to understand.

Now you would think after everything that's been said here, you would think that God would just turn and walk away from it all, that God would just blow us all up, "I'm done." But he doesn't do that. You know, you can talk about the holiness of God and see the glory of God revealed through the things that we've been talking about, see the majesty of his being on display and his majesty is set off by the sin of man in contrast, and you just see how separate and how great and how marvelous our holy God is. That would be enough, but there's another aspect, another dimension to all of this that elevates the majesty of God and the majesty of his Son Jesus Christ into a completely different realm, another realm that is higher and greater even than that because what you see in the book of Jeremiah, what you see in the Gospel of Jesus Christ is this, is that – listen to me carefully here – in the midst of that sin, gloom and judgment, there is undeserved grace. There is undeserved favor that is promised to this sinful nation in the book of Jeremiah and I want you to turn now to Jeremiah 30. Jeremiah 30, remembering, my friends, remembering everything that God has said about their evil stubborn heart, their spiritual apostasy, their spiritual adultery, remembering all of that and yet we keep reading and we come to a new section of the book of Jeremiah in chapter 30 and we find this totally unexpected by human measurement.

Chapter 30, verse 1,

1 The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2 "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Write all the words which I have spoken to you in a book. 3 For behold, days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel and Judah.' The LORD says, 'I will also bring them back to the land that I gave to their forefathers and they shall possess it.'"

Are you kidding me? You just declared judgment and righteously so. These people have no claim on you and here you are promising grace and restoration to them, promising to bring them back and to restore their fortunes after this time of discipline that comes. The human mind is not conditioned to put those things together, to put judgment and grace side-by-side and to see the fullness of God on display. The tendency is to either emphasize judgment to the exclusion of grace or to emphasize grace to the exclusion of holiness and judgment. The Bible doesn't fall into either of those errors.

Look at verse 18 in chapter 30. What we're talking about here, our second point, we're in our second point, this is the promise of the new heart. The promise of the new heart. The problem of the old heart, point number 2, the promise of the new heart, and we're coming up on that in a moment. Chapter 30, verse 18 say,

18 "Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob And have compassion on his dwelling places; And the city will

be rebuilt on its ruin, And the palace will stand on its rightful place. 19 From them will proceed thanksgiving And the voice of those who celebrate; And I will multiply them and they will not be diminished; I will also honor them and they will not be insignificant. 20 Their children also will be as formerly, And their congregation shall be established before Me; And I will punish all their oppressors. 21 Their leader shall be one of them, And their ruler shall come forth from their midst; And I will bring him near and he shall approach Me; For who would dare to risk his life to approach Me?' declares the LORD. 22 'You shall be My people, And I will be your God.'"

Then in verse 24 we get an important time element injected to this,

24 The fierce anger of the LORD will not turn back Until He has performed and until He has accomplished The intent of His heart; In the latter days you will understand this.

This is something looking into the far distant future, still future to us today.

Jeremiah 31:3,

3 The LORD appeared to him from afar, saying [speaking to his people], "I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness. 4 Again I will build you and you will be rebuilt, O virgin of Israel! Again you will take up your tambourines, And go forth to the dances of the merrymakers. 5 Again you will plant vineyards On the hills of Samaria; The planters will plant And will enjoy them.

Do you see what's happening? After declaring judgment against them for their sinful heart, he's saying there's a time of blessing yet to come and there will be so much joy that the tambourines will be patting yet again, there will be dancing and there will be merrymakers and there will be vineyards and there's going to be all of this blessing coming to you.

Now it's not for that immediate generation to see because they're going into judgment. What you see here is this, is that a sovereign God has a magnificent plan that he is working out over the course of long ages of time in order to display his grace to his people, to show his faithfulness to them in the end even though there is discipline for a time, restoration, future joy, a return to the land, understanding that God is speaking to the people of the nation at that time in what we're saying here right now because I want to keep it clear in our minds a distinction with our present day. The imminent judgment that he had described would not be the end of them. Even in their sin, God speaks consolation to his people. He says, "I remember the covenant that I made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and I'm going to keep it. Even though you deserve judgment and you will be judged, I'm going to keep the promises that I made."

Now how can he do that? If these people have such an evil heart and they can't change themselves, they obviously cannot do something to bring about the change on their own because they cannot obey God, they do not obey God, and they would not, they don't want to, and so how is this ever going to come to pass? How would there be joy? What will change in order to make this happen? Jeremiah 31, a very very important passage in the Bible and there are a lot of things about Scripture and about teaching Scripture that fill you with awe and sometimes joy, often a lot of fear because of the majesty of the things that are revealed in the word of God. This is one of them. This is one that brings a heightened sense of awe and majesty and wonder with what we see. Speaking to this sinful nation, this sinful people that had rejected him, God says this in verse 31. He says,

31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. 33 But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Look there in verse 33 what he says. He says, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it." God is going to give his people a new heart. He is going to take away the evil, sinful, rebellious heart that they could not change, that they were powerless, that they were under its domination, God says, "I'm going to take that heart away and I'm going to give you a new heart where love and affection for My law is written on it." God is going to address the problem by taking away the evil heart and giving them something new. The sinful nation was promised something new.

Now turn over to Ezekiel 36 for just a moment. Ezekiel 36 where you see this kind of expanded on, and let's start in verse 22. "Therefore," Ezekiel 36:22. I still hear a few pages rustling.

22 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. 23 I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD," declares the Lord GOD, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. [What's he going to do?] 24 "... I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. 25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you,

and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

You see, God is unilaterally addressing the problem. He doesn't tell them to try harder and to start obeying. That's not going to work. For a millennium it's been proven they could not and would not do that. There was the testimony of centuries that something else had to happen. God's saying what it is. Verse 26,

26 Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

I will replace that which is cold and hard and I'll give it that which is warm and living in its place. And,

27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

God says, "I'm going to make a new covenant with you. We're going to introduce something new because what's in place now you can't keep." And so he graciously promises to give them a new heart, to give them the spiritual capacity to serve and love him which they lack on their own and which they could not produce on their own. In this new covenant, God addresses the reason for their failure which was the problem of their old heart, God addresses that problem by saying, "I will sovereignly give you a new heart with new affections, with My law written on it so that you love My law and obey it naturally, spontaneously rather than from external constraint."

The stubborn heart that led to judgment would be taken away by God and God alone, monergistic for those of you that like theological terms. Not synergistic. This is not Israel working together with God to make this happen, this is God alone doing a sovereign work that only he can do and the stubborn heart that led to judgment would be taken away and in its new place a new heart given. They would obey. They could obey. Most gloriously, they would want to obey because that is the reflection of the heart that God gives them. God solves the problem by changing them on the inside. You see, this was the promise of God.

Now think with me for a moment. The promise of God. God has given his word that this will happen for the Jews. If God has promised and God is faithful, then this will certainly be fulfilled. He's addressing Israel and Judah in what he says here. And so the promise of God is at stake, the faithfulness of God is at stake in what he's saying. He says, he told his people, "I will do this." Well, do you know what happens when God says, "I will do this"? Do you know? He does it. He can't violate his own word.

Go back to Jeremiah 31 for me. Jeremiah 31:35-37. God says this,

35 Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for light by day And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; The LORD of hosts is His name: [and God says this]
36 If this fixed order departs From before Me, Then the offspring of Israel also will cease From being a nation before Me forever." 37 Thus says the LORD, "If the heavens above can be measured And the foundations of the earth searched out below, Then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel For all that they have done," declares the LORD.

God says that, "As long as the order is in place, My promise stands." Friends, I ask you, is this order that he describes, is it still in place? Are the stars still in their orbit? Do we still have the seasons? Then the promise still stands. The promise still stands.

Look at chapter 33 in verse 14.

14 'Behold, days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will fulfill the good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 15 In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth. 16 In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety; and this is the name by which she will be called: the LORD is our righteousness.'

In this passage God is promising that there is a day coming when Jesus Christ will reign on the earth, he will reign as a sovereign King. The promise ensures the result and so God has made promises that set the course for the future, even the future from our perspective today. God made promises. He will keep them not matter what.

So what does that mean for the nation to whom these promises were made? When Jesus Christ returns one day, he will supernaturally change the hearts of the Jews in a great act of regeneration. Nothing in Israel's history matches the description of what we see in this up to today's date. Not the return under Nehemiah, they were not dwelling in safety then. They were constantly threatened. Not the events during the first advent of Christ because he was not here as a sovereign King reigning. He was here as a suffering servant. It's certainly not the circumstances of modern Israel because the Jews in Israel don't embrace Christ as their Messiah. And so you look through different epochs of history in Israel and you see this hasn't been fulfilled yet. That means it's still coming to happen because the promise still stands. You go out tonight if it's not overcast, you go out tonight and look up and see if the moon and the stars are still in their orbit. Go out and look and see is the sun still there. Well, that is God's testimony that his promise still stands to his people. One day Israel's Messiah, Jesus Christ, will reign over a willing nation and that's going to be marvelous. Paul talks about in Romans how if the judgment against Jews led to blessing to Gentiles, how much greater of a blessing will it be when the Jews are restored themselves?

Now thinking about today in the few moments that we have left, we need to understand that the United States of America does not have this promise from God. This is not a promise made to America. This is a promise made to the Old Testament Jews. We don't have that national promise and what that should do is create within us, speaking nationally, I don't know, speaking very very broadly, this should create a sense of profound humility in the hearts of those who would hear, that there is no promise like that for us. Here we are, speaking nationally, here we are with this stubborn evil heart that is being manifested in every level of strata of society, we see it being manifested and we don't have a promise that it's going to get better. This is frightening. This is disturbing.

Look at Ephesians 2 just to remind where those of us that are Gentiles, which is about 99.98% of the audience here, Ephesians 2, what is the condition of Gentiles who are sinners like us in our nation? Well, Paul describes what it was like for the Ephesians before their conversion. He said, "you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." Wow. Then is there no hope? Is there no hope? We manifest the evil heart, we have no promise of restoration, we're on the outside looking in. We're like kids at a candy shop pressing their nose against the window saying, "How do I get into that?" There's no promise that you can. There's no promise for our country like that.

That brings us to our third point: the provision of the new covenant. The provision of the new covenant. Inside your heart is throbbing if you're following what I'm saying but there's got to be hope someplace, isn't there? It can't be that desperate, can it? In your own natural state, yeah, it is. There's nothing that you can do to change this. But in words that we go to repeatedly when we celebrate Communion, Matthew 26:27. We've been in Matthew a lot today, haven't we? What a great Gospel. Matthew 26 beginning in verse 26 we see this, Matthew 26, we see this, "While they were eating, Jesus took some bread," 26:26, "and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.'" The blood of the covenant. What covenant? The new covenant which was promised. You see that and it's verified in the Gospel of Luke 22 when he says about the blood, he says in chapter 22, verse 20, he says, "He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.'" The death of Christ at the cross was the ratification of the promised new covenant that God had made in the days of Jeremiah some 600 years earlier. Christ ratifies the covenant for his people.

And so the Jews have an enacted promise from God that their national restoration will certainly take place. We're on the outside looking in. Bummer. Bummer. And yet what we find, going back to Ephesians 2, is this to the people of God today, to Christians today, we see what has happened to us in the terms of covenant language. Ephesians 2. And you want to talk about grace? You want to talk about mercy undeserved? What has God done for individual Gentiles who are not recipients of the blood promises made to the Jews? In his astonishing grace and mercy, he extends the promise beyond them to

those who would receive Christ. Verse 13. Remember he said you were excluded, you were strangers, you had no hope, you were without God in the world. There was no hope in you that anything could change. Verse 13, "But." Oh, "But," one of those divine adversatives, that divine contrast, "But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." That blood which inaugurated the new covenant, God has graciously extended it to you when he made you alive in Christ Jesus, as it describes earlier in Ephesians 2, and through Christ's death God forgives sin for those who come to him, and in our regeneration, when God caused you to be born again, when God gave you a new heart, he was doing the same thing in a microcosm what he's promised to do nationally for Israel. He took away your sinful evil heart, my Christian friend, my Christian brother and sister, he took away your evil heart and sovereignly gave you a new one with new desires that loved Christ, that loved the Gospel, that desired obedience and holiness instead. 2 Corinthians 5:17, "If any man be in Christ he is," what? "A new creation." Brand new. Created by God, sovereignly by him, not something that you did to yourself.

And so while we have no national promise of restoration in America, we can extend the promise to individuals who would hear and receive. Jesus said in Luke 24 that repentance would be proclaimed in his name to all of the nations for the forgiveness of sin. Our nation has the same heart and sins as ancient Israel. We don't have a promise of national restoration but we have a promise from the Gospel, what that promise should echo and reverberate in the minds of everyone who hears, "It's time for me to be saved out of this evil and perverse generation because where this is going is a downhill freight train to utter catastrophe. I want off before the collision takes place." And the promise of the Gospel, the promise of the shed blood of Jesus Christ is that he'll receive a sinner just like you and he'll save and rescue you individually like he promises to do to the nation in the time yet future to us.

What God can do and here's how we need to think about it as the people of God, we're used to praying for individuals, for their salvation, you're used to praying for your loved ones and so on, but don't you see if God is sovereign and he's sovereign over nations, that what he could do for one he could do for a hundred, he could do for a million. He could send a sweeping revival if only he would. That is the only hope that we have is that God would pour down spiritual blessings on an undeserving people and a renovated people would produce a renovated nation. That's what we pray for, we pray for individual hearts to be saved, we pray for our nation to be saved, realizing that we have no basis, no promise upon which that to take other than the sheer mercy of God. Our sinful nation needs new hearts on a mass scale. Perhaps, my friend, that would start with you.

Let's pray together.

Our gracious Father, so much ground we've covered here this morning. How we pray that You would simply bless Your word to Your people. Those of us that are Gentiles that have been brought near by the blood of Christ, God, let us respond with thanksgiving and trust. If You've been that good to us in our undeserving excluded state, all we can do is say thank You, take me, use me, and I'll trust You for whatever comes. And Father, we

look out on a nation that's like us, like we used to be multiplied by 330 million, and we're overwhelmed at the task and overwhelmed at the prospects of what all of that means and yet, Father, we know that You are sovereign by nature, You're gracious and merciful by nature, and we ask not for political blessings, Father, we're done with those, we ask You for spiritual blessings upon an unworthy people. We are manifesting, Father, the rebellion of our hearts as a nation. Give us, we pray, that new heart. As the Gospel goes out, may Your Spirit attend the preaching of Your word to grant new hearts in a sweeping revival far beyond anything that we've experienced in the past 300 years. That's what we need, Father. That's what we ask for, believing in Your sovereign ability to do it, believing and trusting You for mercy. We ask, Father, and humbly pray not our will but Thine be done. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Thanks for listening to Pastor Don Green from Truth Community Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. You can find church information, Don's complete sermon library and other helpful materials at thetruthpulpit.com. This message is copyrighted by Don Green. All rights reserved.