
SUNDAY SERMON

Hidden Hills Sovereign Grace Baptist Church

Willow, Alaska

Date: December 04, 2016

Scripture Reading: Ezekiel 14.01-23

Text: Ezekiel 14.01-23

**Subject: EZEKIEL SERIES – The message against the
Idolatrous Elders of Israel**

**1 ¶ Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat
before me.**

Elders of Israel – These were the old men; the aged men of Israel; the leaders of the nation. These were men of note, that were in office and power among the Jews, called here elders. Evidently, these were those of the captivity who were, at this time, in Babylon, but the vision looks back.

2 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 3 Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them?

Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: -- These elders of Israel were resolved idolaters; their heart was totally given to their idolatrous worship. These idols are here called "The stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face" was their idols expressed in this way because these idols were both –

1. the object of their sin,
2. and occasion of their ruin.

These idols were their gods. They worshipped them, feared them, trust in them, and plead for them. This is their sin, and ultimately their ruin.

should I be enquired of at all by them? – This is a taunt of the LORD toward these men! Can these men seriously consult me? Is it proper that I should give counsel to obstinate, resolved sinners, who come to inquire, but who will not hearken to my words? Should I help them in their distress, who depend on idols which I hate?

APPLICATION FOR US IN THE CHURCHES. Is there any chance that you and I could fall into idolatry? Let us search the NT for the answer.

Acts 15:13-20 *And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: 14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. 15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, 16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: 17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. 18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. 19 Wherefore my*

sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: 20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.

It is certain that the Jerusalem council who set down these four things knew that God's people could certainly be hurt by a pollution of idols, else, they surely would not have included this in their list. These things are sent to the gentiles, who never were under the law covenant.

1 Corinthians 5:11 *But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.*

1 Corinthians 10:7 *Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.*

Colossians 3:5 *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:*

Covetousness – This word "covetousness" is marked off from the list which precedes it by the definite *Greek* article. In this way, it forms a whole class by itself, distinct from the class before

mentioned, that is, "fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, and evil concupiscence. Covetous implies a self-idolizing, grasping spirit; far worse than another *Greek* term translated "the love of money" in 1 Timothy 6.10.

which is idolatry--that is, inasmuch as it is "idolatry." Self and mammon are set up in the heart as the person's god instead of the LORD God, Jehovah.

Matthew 6:24 *No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

Ephesians 5:5 *For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

This ye know – you are aware. That no covetous man who is an idolator. Covetousness is worship of the creature instead of the Creator, the highest treason against the King of kings.

1 John 2:15 *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the*

Father is not in him.

Ephesians 5:5 *For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

As the Apostle John said in closing his book of 1st John:

1 John 5:21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

Thus, it behoves us to never be idolaters and be tainted with the pollutions of idols.

4 Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols; 5 That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols.

These persons were the men of renown in Israel. They had set up the idols in their hearts and put them before their faces and have come to you, the prophet! But, I the LORD will answer him according to the multitude of his idols. I will take the house of Israel in their own heart. They are all estranged from me – foreign from me through their idols. Can anyone doubt that the

nation, as a whole, was greatly influenced by these idolatrous elders of Israel? Therefore, the LORD, himself, would answer them according to the multitude of their idols.

6 Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations.

And what is God's message to be spoken by Ezekiel? Thus saith the Lord God! These are God's words to you, O Israel! Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations. Turn away from these abominations and turn to me!

7 For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to enquire of him concerning me; I the LORD will answer him by myself: 8 And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

What a warning to those who separated themselves from the LORD GOD! God would answer him, not by the prophet, but by himself. He would set his face against that man who had set up idols in his heart. The LORD would make him a sign and proverb. God would cut him off from the midst of His people. These cut off ones would know that it was Jehovah God who did it!

9 And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the LORD have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel.

Remarkable statement this! Does the LORD GOD deceive the prophets who prophesy falsely? Indeed, he does! The LORD did it by sending a lying spirit to him, as he did to Ahab's prophets in 1st Kings 22.20-23.

1 Kings 22:20-23 *And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. 21 And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him. 22 And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. 23 Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee.*

The LORD gave them strong delusions, to believe a lie, and publish it.

(CF) 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 *And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

God's hand was to be stretched out upon that man - his avenging hand; the stroke of his power. The LORD would destroy these idolaters from the midst of His people Israel. God would justly leave him in his blindness. Because he was thus blinded of the LORD, he would think in himself that he spoke the truth, when he actually spoke a lie. How horribly blind!

10 And they shall bear the punishment of their iniquity: the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh unto him;

And they shall bear the punishment of their iniquity, --

Both the false prophet, and those that sought unto him, and were deceived by him. Sad is the case when a man is forced by of the LORD to bear his own sins, and the punishment of them. Much sadder is the fact that such person has no surety to undertake for him – he has no mediator or days-man between God and him, and none to make atonement for him.

the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh *unto him*; --

They both alike are guilty and they are liable! Each chasing after the desires of their own evil hearts; the people of Israel were seeking for smooth things to be spoken to them; the prophet was glad so speak to them smooth things. And why? It was to gratify himself, and all that was for the sake of gain. Both are deceived, and both are blind, and so both shall fall into the same ditch, by the judgment of God upon them. And what was the ultimate purpose of God in this -

11 That the house of Israel may go no more astray from me,

neither be polluted any more with all their transgressions; but that they may be my people, and I may be their God, saith the Lord GOD.

That the house of Israel may go no more astray from me, neither be polluted any more with all their transgressions;
 -- Truly the LORD has no pleasure in the death of the wicked!

Ezekiel 33:11 *Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*

they have wandered as sheep, which sheep by nature are apt to go the wrong way, especially when they are seduced and drawn out of the way by false prophets. But afflictions tend to turn God's people away from sheepish wanderings. In the very same way that we, as those of the New Covenant, suffer the chastisement of God when we stray away – and why? That we might be partakers of His holiness.

Hebrews 12:10-11 *For they [our earthly fathers] verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.*
11 *Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*

But that they may be my people, and I may be their God,

saith the Lord GOD. -- Israel was the Lord's people because God had chosen them. He had chosen the nation and then delivered them out of bondage. By his great power, he brought them to the land of promise. In name and external profession, they were God's people, but they had forgotten their relationship to the LORD God. They had forgotten their duty toward God. These afflictions and corrections were designed to cause them to turn to the LORD and love him, to obey and walk with him, as he is their God, and they his people. This is the intent and effect the chastening rod should have on God's own people.

12 The word of the LORD came again to me, saying, 13 Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it:

In verses 12 and 13, the LORD says what he shall do when the land sins against him by trespassing grievously. He would stretch out his hand upon the land. He would break the staff of bread and send a famine. He would cut off man and beast from it. What a terrible thought that God should do this upon His own people Israel! But they, had turned away from the LORD and sinned grievously. They had been warned of God long ago concerning their hearts being turned away from him.

READ DEUTERONOMY 28.15-62 As Moses reminded Israel of God's law on the plains of Moab before they crossed over into the promised land – we read these words which he told them.

Deuteronomy 1:1 *These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain over against the Red sea, between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizahab.*

14 Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD.

When such a judgment was sent on the Land by the LORD – lack of bread and famine, though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in the land – they would deliver but their own souls! These three men were most eminent for holy and upright walking with God. They were very dear to the LORD and were very careful to look to the welfare of others. Nobody can doubt that they were powerful prayer warriors!

By faith, Noah had moved with fear and prepared an ark to the saving of his house. He made preparation in the fear of the LORD and preserved his family. But had he been in this land of Israel, at this time, he should have delivered but his own soul in his righteousness – and not another person!

By faith, Daniel stopped the mouths of Lions – wrought righteousness, stayed separate, prayed without ceasing, and escaped the edge of the sword. He cared for – and helped his brethren, Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego while in Babylon, but had he been in this land of Israel, he should have delivered but his own soul in his righteousness – and not another person!

By faith, Job prayed and sacrificed for his children every day thinking that perhaps they had sinned and cursed God in their hearts. He bore cruel judgments at the hand of God's instrument, Satan, and suffered the loss of all his wealth and his health. He pleaded with God and persevered until God brought him to himself where he abhorred himself and repented in dust and ashes. He had patiently endured and was blessed in his end above all that had been done in his life; but had he been in this land of Israel, he should have delivered but his own soul in his righteousness – and not another person!

No wonder the LORD GOD set these great men of faith before the eyes of the false prophets and the nation of Israel! How we ought to consider them as well and turn from any wickedness in ourselves to serve the LORD in truth and righteousness.

15 If I cause noisome beasts to pass through the land, and they spoil it, so that it be desolate, that no man may pass through because of the beasts: 16 Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only shall be delivered, but the land shall be desolate.

The LORD GOD has warned Israel that their disobedience would result in him sending evil beasts among them. He could command the beasts at any time and they would obey him.

Leviticus 26:22 *I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your high ways shall be desolate.*

(CF) Amos 9:1-4 *I saw the Lord standing upon the altar: and he said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword: he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered. 2* *Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down: 3* *And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them: 4* *And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good.*

The LORD could command the beasts either for evil or for good – for good as he did for Elijah in the days of the great drought in Israel.

1 Kings 17:4 *And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.*

Though these three men – Noah, Daniel, and Job!

17 Or if I bring a sword upon that land, and say, Sword, go through the land; so that I cut off man and beast from it: 18 **Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they**

only shall be delivered themselves.

Or, if I bring a sword upon that land, and say, Sword, go through the land; so that I cut off man and beast from it!

– What a fearful thing it is to be accosted by a great army wielding swords and piercing all that lives through until the blood pours out profusely! Though these three men – Noah, Daniel, and Job -

19 Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast: 20 Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.

Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast: --

Or the plague, which is the destruction that wastes at noon day; this is from the Lord, and a sore judgment it is! Here is an epidemic – a disease, a deadly virus. Contagious and infectious! What if suddenly, there comes a strange infectious disease on the population for which there is no inoculation! No cure! Look at it, beloved! God sends it in his fury to cut off from the land man and beast!

And though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it -

21 For thus saith the Lord GOD; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast?

Those three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, with their best interests, should not be able to keep off one of the four judgments. No, in their righteousness, they would save their lives only and not the lives of their kindred. How much less should they be able to keep off all four of the LORD's judgments when He sent them all to go at once, as he did! As he has done, against Jerusalem, to cut off the obstinate, incorrigible ones in the midst of it.

22 Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth, both sons and daughters: behold, they shall come forth unto you, and ye shall see their way and their doings: and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, even concerning all that I have brought upon it.

Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant -- That is, there shall remain in Jerusalem, on which God's four sore judgments should be sent. In this great judgment, God shall leave a remnant. This remnant would be a sign to all the rest of the nation when they were taken to Babylon.

that shall be brought forth, both sons and daughters; -- that is, which should be brought forth out of Jerusalem when the city is taken. These would not be destroyed either by famine, or by noisome beasts, or by the sword, or by the pestilence; and these, many of them, both sons and daughters. There would be some of each sex which should be the means of propagating a posterity. These should be those which would return again, and re-people the land.

behold, they shall come forth unto you; -- Those naked, hunger-starved, ridiculed and mocked captives, through heats and colds, through sands and tedious travels, shall come to Babylon. You will be amazed to see them – and you will most certainly not envy their position or desire to be in their stead. They shall come out of Jerusalem, and their own land, into Babylon, to the captives which are already there in the land of the Chaldeans. Remember, Ezekiel is now there and LORD is speaking to him.

and ye shall see their way and their doings; -- Ye shall see them, and consider and know their way. You will know what it is that has brought them. You will consider as you see them how horrible was the judgment of God upon them because of their sins and idolatry.

and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, even concerning all that I have brought upon it; -- that is, you will be satisfied – at least, you will bow yourselves to the justice of God. Those in Babylon would submit themselves, in their hearts, to the providence of God, in bringing destruction upon Jerusalem. As bad as all that was for them! They would remember that they murmured at the LORD - had hard thoughts of God concerning the destruction of their home city. But now hearing the confessions of that miserable remnant that was brought from Jerusalem to them – and in seeing the horrible wicked lives and circumstance of this remnant, they would now be fully satisfied that God was righteous in all that he had done. It is sure that, in their minds as they viewed this remnant, instead of thinking God to be

rigorous and severe, he had been kind and merciful in removing them and taking them to the land of Babylon.

23 And they shall comfort you, when ye see their ways and their doings: and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord GOD.

The captives would be comforted by seeing the ways and doings of that remnant spared from Jerusalem. There is no question that they would not be comforted about their past sinful ways and doings when they saw that naked, despicable remnant. It would be a means of settling their minds, and causing them to rejoice in God's providence. In seeing this, they would be satisfied that God was just in bringing upon them all the evils he had. They would be sure that they were punished less than their sins deserved.

The captives would not rejoice in their brethren's misery. It would comfort them to reflect back and realize it was a good hour indeed in which they resolved to obey God, and giving themselves up to the Chaldeans and submitting themselves to the rule of Nebuchadnezzar as God had directed them. God will be as true in his mercies as he hath been in his judgments; this is matter of great affliction and grief, but also that of comfort and hope.

Thanks be to God for his abundant mercy for them – and for us in sending His only begotten Son to die for our sins and to give us eternal life through his Son. I urge you to seek the LORD while he may be found; to call upon him while he is near. Are you believing in Jesus, the Christ who died to save His people

from their sins? We pray that it is so. Confess him! Follow him!
Bring him honor and glory in your life – all of it!