

## **Journey through Jeremiah Part 10 – Perpetual Backsliding**

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney, Th.D. – Wednesday, February 22, 2017

### † **Jeremiah 8:4-22**

We pick up tonight where we left off last Wednesday evening in Chapter 8. We looked at the first 3 verses already which went with Chapter 7. We are going to see tonight how wicked things had gotten in the land of Judah. The LORD says that they were “perpetual backsliders.” We will see how depraved the people had gotten. So wicked that the Bible says they couldn’t even blush anymore.

(4) *Moreover thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD; Shall they fall, and not arise? shall he turn away, and not return?*

Even though the LORD has already told Jeremiah that the people would not harken unto him, he still instructs Jeremiah to further prophecy unto the inhabitants of Judah concerning their sin. They will not be able to say that they were not warned.

He makes an obvious statement; if a man falls, doesn’t he get back up again? If a man loses his way doesn’t he retrace his steps and find his way back? That is the natural inclination of man, however, that is not what Judah is going to do.

(5) *Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.*

He says that the people of Jerusalem perpetually backslide. Perpetual means non-stop. Man, has always tried to invent a perpetual motion machine. A machine that can run non-stop on its own without any outside power source. But it cannot be achieved by man. God created a perpetual motion machine when he breathed life into man and gave him a human heart. The human heart is a perpetual motion machine. As long as it is taken care of it will last forever.

But the inhabitants of Judah are perpetual backsliders. They refuse to return. I’ve always been intrigued by that word “**backslider**.” You used to hear it a lot from the pulpit. Talking about people that are supposed be Christians but not living their life for the LORD, not attending the Church where their name is on the roll book.

Here in our King James Bible the word backslider comes from the Hebrew word: **mesh-oo-baw** It means “**apostasy, turning away**.” The inhabitants of Judah backslide perpetually, meaning they never stop backsliding.

(6) *I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.*

The idea here is that of a horse rushing into battle. The people of Judah are so determined to remain in their sins that they rush into it like a horse rushing into battle. They refuse to repent, they refuse to turn back, they just keep rushing forward.

(7) *Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the LORD.* (8) *How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain.*

Here he is using the analogy of migrating animals. They know their appointed times to move but His people don’t know that it is time for them to make a move or suffer the judgement of the LORD. They claim to be so wise but they are dumber than even these simple animals that know when to move.

(9) *The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?*

These so-called wise men of Judah are dismayed. They boasted of their wisdom and now when the LORD’s judgement is upon them they feel really foolish. They never saw it coming even though they had been warned.

(10) *Therefore will I give their wives unto others, and their fields to them that shall inherit them: for every one from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.*

Verses 10-12 is almost a word for word repeat of what we studied in Jeremiah 6:10-15. He deals with the same treachery of Judah. How that everyone from the least to the greatest, the prophet and priest dealt falsely.

(11) *For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.*

He describes the message of the false prophets claiming there is peace, peace in the land of Judah but He says there is NO peace. My friend, there is no peace apart from God. It is impossible to have peace without Him. Claiming to have peace when you do not have God is nothing but a sham and you are only fooling yourself to believe otherwise.

(12) *Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.*

They were so in love with their sins and abominations that they were no longer ashamed of them. They relished in them. They no longer had the ability to blush over their sins because they had no shame.

(13) *I will surely consume them, saith the LORD: there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them.*

Again, he describes the utter devastation that is going to take place because of their sin. The LORD will allow their enemy to completely wipe out their land.

(14) *Why do we sit still? assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defenced cities, and let us be silent there: for the LORD our God hath put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the LORD.*

These remarks are from the inhabitants of Judah after they realize they have brought all of this on themselves. They have resigned to enter into the defenced cities, that would be cities that are protected by walls such as Jerusalem, and there remain silent and face the wrath that is going to befall on them.

(15) We looked for peace, but no good *came*; and for a time of health, and behold trouble!

They were looking for that peace that their false prophets had promised them but it never came. All they received was death and destruction and trouble.

(16) The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell therein.

Then a description of their enemies from the North, the mighty army of the Chaldeans led by King Nebuchadnezzar. They were fighting men, furiously riding in on their war horses. Everyone in their wake trembled in fear of these men of destruction. They devoured the land and destroyed the cities.

(17) For, behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices, among you, which *will not be charmed*, and they shall bite you, saith the LORD.

Then the LORD compares the invading army to serpents and cockatrices. These are poisonous snakes. A cockatrice is a viper. He says that they cannot be charmed and will bite them.

(18) *When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me.*

These last 5 verses are Jeremiah and the LORD speaking. Jeremiah is in sorrows because of the destruction to his people and the land of Judah. This is the reason he is known as the weeping prophet. He laments about what is going on in Judah. He says his "**heart is faint**." In our modern day terms we would say our hearts are broken. Jeremiah uses that phrase 4 different times. Twice in Jeremiah and twice in Lamentations he speaks of having a faint heart because of what has occurred.

For example in **Lamentations 1:22** Let all their wickedness come before thee; and do unto them, as thou hast done unto me for all my transgressions: for my sighs *are many*, and my heart *is faint*.

And in **Lamentations 5:15-17**: The joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning. 16 The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned! 17 For this **our heart is faint**, for these things our eyes are dim.

(19) Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people because of them that dwell in a far country: *is not the LORD in Zion? is not her king in her? Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities?*

He describes how the people cry out when the time of trouble comes to them. They ask "Is not the LORD in Zion?" They felt that they should be protected because of who they were and where they lived. But because of their wickedness and their worship of idols the LORD will not protect them.

(20) *The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.*

Because of their sin and the punishment the LORD has dealt out to them the harvest time has come to an end and they yielded nothing. Their crops failed, they have nothing to live on. The LORD held back the rains needed for a good harvest.

(21) For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me.

These are the words of Jeremiah. He says he is **hurt, black, and astonished**.

- He is hurt because his heart is broken.
- He is black because he is in mourning and in ashes.
- He is astonished because the people refused to turn to the LORD and are now in utter devastation.

(22) *Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?*

The balm was the balsam that was used to apply to wounds. It was plentiful in the area around Gilead. You may remember when Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery, the people that they sold him to was a bunch of Ishmeelites that had been to Gilead and were carrying balm they had purchased there to sell in Egypt.

**Genesis 37:25-27**: And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry *it* down to Egypt. 26 And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit *is it* if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? 27 Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he *is* our brother *and* our flesh. And his brethren were content.

It was also a place that had many doctors but there was no physician for the inhabitants of Judah. There is nothing that is going to heal the wounds that they have. The physician they needed has turned them away because they forsook Him. Now they will have to pay by suffering.