

Jeremiah 16: 1-21; “God’s Hand and His Might”, Sermon # 16 in the series – “Heart Lessons Learned for a Prophet and the People of God”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on July 27th, 2014, in the Afternoon Worship Service.

As we think about the words of our text this afternoon, we must carefully consider and ask ourselves whether we know God; whether we have come to know the reality of that great spiritual strength which comes to us by calling upon His name? For if we do not know this reality, it will mean agonizing disappointment for all of eternity; that we did not come to know His hand of mercy, and His mighty power to save us. His earthly judgments, which come upon certain men and societies in this lifetime, are intended for that very purpose, as it says in verses 20 and 21. “Will a man make gods for himself, which are not gods?” “Therefore I will this once cause them to know My hand and My might. And they shall know that My Name is the Lord. In the midst of God’s heaviest judgments upon sinful people in this life, He still causes them to know His hand and His might, that they shall know His Name. To know His name savingly, is to come to find mercy.

Our question therefore, this afternoon, is this. “How does the Lord cause men to know His hand and His might? He does it in 3 ways; ways which were ways of judgment in that day. But they also declare to us in New Covenant times, His willingness to show mercy to all who will call upon His name. I shall be careful to weave the gospel of Jesus Christ into this garment of judgment that I am showing to you now; because in Christ, all is spiritually reversed for the ones trusting in Him. You ladies know that in sewing tapestries and embroidered work that the backside of the garment often looks like a confused mess, but the other side is beautiful. The backside is very comparable to a picture of the Lord’s judgments. His judgments seem awful to behold; and sometimes they even seem to make us think that He will never show mercy. But as the Master’s hand skillfully uses the needle, on the tapestry of the lives of His elect people, it will produce a beautiful and lasting result on the other side. This is His special and beautiful work of saving your soul and bringing you to eternal glory. This afternoon I want you to lay down your own work, your own confused tapestry work of living your life to yourself, and behold the Master’s work. Listen carefully now – God causes people to know His Hand and His might, to judge and to save in these 3 ways: 1st – By taking away His blessings from those who are disobedient. (Verses 1-9) 2nd – By showing them the connections between sin and judgment. (Verses 10-13) And 3rd – By hunting and fishing for sinners. (Verses 14-21)

1st of all – God causes some people to know His Hand and His might by taking away His blessings from them.

Taking verse 5 as representative of verses 1-9: “For thus says the Lord: ‘Do not enter the house of mourning, nor go to lament or bemoan them; for I have taken away My peace from this people,’ says the Lord, ‘lovingkindness and mercies.’” The picture we have portrayed before us in these verses is one of agonizing judgment. It is showing us the earthly consequences of the sin of God’s ancient people Israel which are a prelude to the eternal judgment of hell. Sin is any disobedience or transgression of God’s holy law, but it leads to something far more dreadful than sinners want to admit. Sin is something that begins in our hearts as an evil desire, or lust, or thought, in which we are drawn away from God Himself and the truth of His word. This is what makes sin so hateful to God. This is why He must punish sin in all who refuse to repent. This is why, when it is seen by God in the persons of men, it must be judged by Him. The expectation of God, concerning all people, is that they would desire God more than any human person or any earthly thing. But sin ignites desires in our hearts and our minds which draws us away from God to the service of ourselves. These desires deceive us and they alienate us from our Maker if we do not know Christ and the power of His grace. God is the source of all good, and all blessing, to His creature man. But our God is a jealous God. He will not accept us having any other god in our lives. And He must

righteously administer justice in the government of the world. He will reward men according to their deeds. In His justice our God is a consuming fire. He has kindled a fire in His righteous anger which will never be quenched and those who will not repent and believe in Jesus Christ will be a part of those everlasting burnings. For those people who have been given great light and great privileges, and yet continue on in sin, God reserves His most awful and agonizing judgments. It is certainly a terrible judgment of God if He determines to take away His peace from any people; but this is what He did with His Old Covenant people, the Jews.

We must confess, as we think about these things, that God certainly knows how to faithfully execute judgment. And that even when He has to do this, His “strange work”, that still He is good to all. We know that this is true from His word: “His tender mercies are over all His works”. “He is kind even to evil and ungrateful men.” “He opens His hand and satisfies the desire of every living thing.” “The Lord is righteous in all His ways and gracious in all His works.” He is near to all who call upon Him; to those who call upon Him in truth.” “He preserves all who love Him,” it says. “But all the wicked He will destroy”. (Psalm 145: 20) We must also state that the Lord is patient with all people. He put these people on notice through His words given to them by His prophets in that day; and in our own day he puts us on notice through the pastors and preachers of His word. And then He waits to hear from us. Will we listen? Will we turn back from pursuing our sins? And so let us receive this lesson: When we do not consider the fact that this is God’s ultimate concern – to live for His glory, to live in obedience to keep His commandments, to walk with Him in love, and thankfulness for all of His blessings; then after He considers the matter carefully, God in His wise justice asks – “Why should I be patient any longer?” “I will bring my righteous judgments.” “I will take away their blessings; the things which they have taken for granted, that I will always give them these things.

There are a number of blessings which He took from the Jewish nation of that day because of their sins and their unbelief. One was the voice of gladness and the voice of rejoicing. Look with me again at verse 9. “For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Behold, I will cause to cease from this place, before your eyes and in your days, the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride.’” God was here, in this judgment that He was bringing, taking away, the blessing of marital bliss. All that was included in it, and all that issued from it. What greater joy is there than that of marriage? What greater happiness is there? In terms of earthly blessings, none. Turn with me over to Proverbs 5: 15-21. “Drink water from your own cistern, and running water from your own well.” “Should your fountains be dispersed abroad, streams of water in the streets?” “Let them be only your own, and not for strangers with you.” “Let your fountain be blessed and rejoice with the wife of your youth.” “As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love.” “For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman, and be embraced in the arms of a seductress?” “For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He ponders all his paths.”

We are told here, married men, in these verses, to rejoice in the wife of our youth as a loving hind and as a graceful doe, to let her breasts satisfy you always; to always be enraptured with her love. Now let us ask ourselves, husbands: Am I being faithful to my marital vows? Am I satisfied with my wife, and enraptured by her love? The men of that day, many of them, were adulterers. And because they loved this sin, God came to them in great judgments. His judgments were going to consume them. Many men in our day are addicted to pornography. Do they realize that this is a vile form of adultery? Dear Christian men, we need to understand that we will undermine not only our material blessings, but our spiritual blessings if we will not repent of this filthy sin. I trust that many in our society, in our day, do not want our great material blessings to be removed; neither do we as Christians want to be useless and unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ. But will we not see that the greatest blessing to any society is strong marriages? And out of strong marriages come

sons and daughters who will glorify God with their lives, if their parents will teach them the way of the Lord, and set before them the godly example of living their lives by faith in Jesus Christ, and faith in the truth of His word. But Jeremiah the prophet would never know the reality of this blessing of marriage or children upon the society that he lived in. Because the sin of this people had gone too far. And it was not a time, any longer, for holy mirth, or for expecting that God would bless any marriage or child. The mothers and fathers, the daughters and the sons, would all die gruesome deaths. God would cause the voice of gladness to cease. We should remember from this that there is a time to laugh and a time to mourn. And it is not good to mourn when we should be rejoicing. And we should not be laughing, when we ought to mourn.

It is very important to keep these things straight. Days of judgment are not a time for hilarity and laughter. It is not time to go to the house of feasting. It says in Ecclesiastes 7: 2 – “Better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting... sorrow is better than laughter.” “For by a sad countenance the heart is made better.” “The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning.” “But the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.” The difficult thing about these judgments that the Lord was bringing, was that He even forbade Jeremiah to enter into the house of mourning for these people, or go into the house of feasting either. Jeremiah was not to bemoan or lament their being destroyed. He was not to give consolation either. Their banquets were often being held in the houses of mourning; kind of like when you and I go to the funerals of unsaved people; there are people there who are having a party and celebrating the life of a sinner who now is supposedly in a better place. The Lord was intending to take His peace from that people; His lovingkindness and His mercy. Surely this is the worst of all calamities. Surely this is what our sin deserves and how we ought to praise God in our hearts that His righteous judgment has fallen on our Lord Jesus at the cross. It is in believing in what Christ has done, there at the cross, that we find forgiveness for all our sins, even the worst of our sins. There we find real and lasting peace. There we find our sackcloth loosed and our minds girded with gladness. Here God causes the one who is believing in His Son to know His hand of mercy reaching out to the vilest of sinners; His Almighty power can by faith change the hardest heart.

Now 2ndly – God shows His Hand and His Might to judge and to save men by showing them the connections between sin and judgment. (verses 10-13)

We find the people here questioning the great disaster that the Lord was bringing against them. They act as though they haven't sinned at all. They say in verse 10b – “What is our iniquity?” “Or what is our sin that we have committed against the Lord our God?” But the Lord answers through Jeremiah the prophet, in verse 11 – It was “because your fathers have forsaken Me,” and verse 12 – “You have done worse; “following the dictates of your own evil heart, so that no one listens to Me,” says God. It is the sure sign of a wicked heart when it dismisses the conviction of sin, when it denies the fact of sin itself as not true, even though it can be proved. When a person is coming to know Christ, God's Spirit produces a revolutionary change in the heart and mind of the sinner. They suddenly begin to realize that they have been serving themselves and their own lusts and desires, and not God. They begin to realize in how many ways God's law is not kept. They really know that they have not listened to God's voice in the preaching of the His word. But when the word comes with power, and grace is at work in the heart, then regeneration takes places, and the hand and the mighty power of God are felt and known. The New Believer in Christ begins to understand the depth of sin's hold on their life. That power is now broken, and the believer sees much more sin in themselves as they grow in holiness. The believer sees the connection between sin and judgment. They know that they deserve condemnation, but Christ has suffered for them on the cross, and their sins were all nailed there to the tree with their Savior. The judgment due to the sinner has been borne by Christ. A believer can truly rejoice; Jesus kept the law in my place. Jesus was made sin on my behalf. They believe and receive the truth that they shall not come into

judgment but have passed out of death into life. Let me ask you, whether you have seen the connection between sin and judgment, and Christ and mercy?

3rd – God causes people to know His hand and His Might by hunting and fishing for them. (verses 14-21)

Because of their great sins, God was going to cast the Jews out of their land, and banish them to Babylon. There, they would be forced to worship the false gods of that nation, and God would not show them any favor. I wonder if you have sufficiently considered what a great privilege it is to worship the true God in a land of freedom and peace? This is the greatest of God-given blessings. To be engaged in the sanctuary, to see His power and glory by faith as we do now; to sing, and listen to His word, as we pray and share sweet fellowship together – What a blessing it is! How horrible it is when God’s judgments take away these glorious things and we are forced to behold false worship gaining the ascendancy on every side. Truly it is time to hang up the harps upon the willows by the river of Babylon and weep. Psalm 137, verse 1 – “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion.” “We hung our harps upon the willows in the midst of it.” “For there, those who carried us away captive asked of us a song, and those who plundered us requested mirth, saying ‘Sing us one of the songs of Zion!’” “How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?” Sometimes a saint of God can become discouraged when they realize that it is some sin that He is disciplining them for; sometimes God brings a physical affliction; sometimes it is our own realization of how great a sinner we are, which torments our soul, and we cannot truly sing and worship. It was a glorious day when you were converted to Christ, was it not? But now your soul is oppressed. Remember, O believer, that the Lord will not forget you. He will bring back His banished ones and cause them to rejoice.”

In verses 5 and 6 of Psalm 137, we see how very much God truly loves His dear people even when they are banished for a time. “If I do not remember you, let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth—If I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy.” You see, God is faithful to His promises, God is faithful to His elect people. They may be banished for a time. He will discipline them diligently when they sin. But He will never cast them away forever. The gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. (Romans 11: 29) We can see, by faith in the promises, that God remembers each person who is trusting in Him. And if they are His elect, He will most certainly save them and keep them. You see this in verse 16 of our text in Jeremiah. “Behold, I will send for many fishermen, says the Lord, and they shall fish them; and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.” This speaks of Israel’s being brought back from captivity and dispersion, both back then, and in the future when they will be saved as a nation, and brought into the Church. He is saying that He knows how to bring them back from these awful calamities, both back then, and in the future, but certainly we can apply it to all believers as well. All of His dear people, He knows how to restore. He knows how to bring them back from all the captivity of sin. He knows how to bring out of all oppression of spirit, and how to lift from off of them all of His disciplinary actions and bring them to a thorough repentance, a clean heart, and a restored soul. It is only because of Christ’s death, resurrection, and intercession, that each Christian can know the reality of this blessed restoration. But so much do they know it, that each one can say: “The Lord lives who brought me out of the bondage of sin. The Lord lives who brought me back from the places where He had brought me to, in discipline. We will then weep and rejoice, and call Him our Strength and our Fortress; our Refuge in the day of affliction as it says in verse 19 of our text. I pray that you will, this afternoon, know the reality of God’s power and His might; to know that His name is Jehovah, and His Son’s name is Jesus Christ.