

When Pastor Zwingli became the new pastor of the church in Zurich, Switzerland in the year 1521, at the first service he opened his Bible to Matthew 1, and began to preach it. At the next service, Pastor Zwingli picked up where he left off in the Gospel of Matthew, and preached some more. Verse by verse, book by book, right through the New Testament, and then the Old Testament, Pastor Zwingli explained the Bible in words that the people could understand.

That was the beginning of the Reformation in Switzerland. Now 500 years later, we could go to Zurich, Switzerland today and find this plaque over the door of the church there that reads, “The Reformation of Huldrych Zwingli began here on January 1, 1519.” That was a famous sermon.

Here in Jeremiah 7, we have one of the most famous sermons. We even have a name for it. It is Jeremiah’s Temple Sermon. It is called that because God commanded Jeremiah to preach this sermon in the Temple. The point of the sermon is that **God gives us twin graces: grace to be saved, and grace to be holy.**

### **1. The church is not our safe house from God’s wrath. (v.1-4)**

Jeremiah 7:1-2, *“The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: ‘Stand in the gate of the Lord’s house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the Lord, all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the Lord.’”*

God wanted this sermon to get the widest possible hearing. While the whole nation made their way to the capital city of Jerusalem for the worship service, God told Jeremiah to stand in the gate. Jeremiah saw crowds of people coming up the steps of the temple to worship God there.

They were in national crisis. King Josiah, the great and good king who improved things, was gone. After the death of King Josiah, and the light that he gave in his reforms, the people had slipped back into spiritual darkness. King Josiah’s son King Jehoahaz, had only been the king reigning in Jerusalem for 3 months before the Pharaoh of Egypt carried him off to Egypt where he died, too!

So now King Jehoiakim took the throne. But the people were discouraged, and they were asking – how long will this king last?

What would God say to a discouraged people?

We come to verse 3, and here is Jeremiah the preacher, speaking God’s words as Jeremiah the prophet of God. Here goes verse 3, *“Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place.”*

The message is simple message. It was clear. But the people did not like it.

Wait, that sounds like the Reformers. Countries in turmoil. The people gathered for a message from God. The message is simple, but the people did not like it.

The religious leaders wanted to kill Jeremiah. Same thing happened to the Reformers, such as Martin Luther. When Luther began preaching reformation sermons, the Pope attacked Luther's message, and called him a wild boar, a serpent, and a "pestiferous virus."

What was it about Jeremiah's Temple Sermon that was so offensive? Jeremiah was teaching that being religious people, without being holy people, cannot save you.

They were church-going folks! The people had mistakenly put their trust in the outward processes of religion. If they got dressed up and came to that location with regularity, it would somehow make them okay with God? Verse 4, "...*the temple of The LORD, the temple of The LORD, the temple of The LORD...*" What is wrong with that? What is the operative word in the phrase? Temple. The prepositional phrase "of The LORD" modifies the main noun "temple." That means that the people had faith in a building! The temple was solid. The temple in Jerusalem was a place where they could enter through the huge gates, and look up and marvel, and look around, and feel safe. They were putting their confidence in outward things for their spiritual beliefs.

They were close. You can understand the confusion of the people, can't you? It does seem that the one stable thing, the one thing upon which they could depend was the temple, God's own promised dwelling place.

To say it another way – as long as they fulfilled their stated religious obligations to attend temple's festival gatherings, they could leave that temple and go and do in their homes and in their travels whatever they wanted during the rest of their weeks, their months, their years, and their lives.

Their beliefs about the temple had nothing to say about holy living. Because their belief was in the temple itself, and not in The LORD of the temple, they believed that their lives were irrelevant, and that therefore the LORD God would never judge them for their sins.

And what did Jeremiah characterize those words? DECEPTIVE!

What is it that makes this deceptive?

They trust in the temple, instead of trusting in the LORD God.

They should have said, "This is the LORD of temple, the LORD of the temple, the LORD of the temple."

## **2. Church-going, without holy living, makes you a fake. (v.5-11)**

Verses 5-7 continue the convicting message of this temple sermon, "*For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice one with another, <sup>6</sup> if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed*

*innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm, <sup>7</sup> then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever.”*

Notice four times the word “if.”

God was showing them their error. They wanted covenant blessings without covenant obligations. They wanted to be justified, without bothering with being sanctified. They wanted faith without practice.

They were presuming. Presuming on God’s choice of them as God’s people. Presuming on God’s election and selection of them.

Do Reformed people ever do this? We believe in election. God’s election of us. Once we believe, do we then presume that we are elect, and ease off on ourselves in terms of right living? When we take our foot off the proverbial accelerator in the metaphor of driving our lives, it shows that we never understood the LORD God, and His grace. God’s grace gives us the Lord Jesus Christ, and all that comes with that blessing – both justification and sanctification, both faith and practice, both covenant promises, and covenant responsibilities. The grace is double grace – grace to be saved, and grace to be holy.

We cannot separate the justification by faith – the rallying cry of the reformation, from sanctification by grace, the consequence of faith in God. God both declares us righteous for all time and makes us righteous in real time.

We need reformation. We need the warnings of Jeremiah.

Or, if we are trusting in a spiritual experience from a long time ago, we could say, “I am born again, I am born again, I am born again.” Or “I’m baptized, I’m baptized, I’m baptized.” Or “I belong to a Reformed Church, I belong to a Reformed Church, I belong to a Reformed church!”

Another pitfall is to trust in current personal spiritual performance, “I have daily devotions, I have daily devotions, I have daily devotions.”

“I believe in grace alone, I believe in grace alone, I believe in grace alone.”

The thing that is so dangerous about putting our confidence in outward religion, is that there is nothing wrong with it!!!!

There was nothing wrong with the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem. The people were supposed to go there for worship.

There is nothing wrong with a Reformed church, and daily devotions, and believing in grace alone. All of these things are necessary for us.

But we DO NOT PUT OUR TRUST IN ANY OF THESE THINGS.

Philippians 3:4-7 is Paul’s list of things he must not trust in....

*<sup>4</sup> though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more:*

*<sup>5</sup> circumcised on the eighth day,  
of the people of Israel,*

*of the tribe of Benjamin,  
a Hebrew of Hebrews;  
as to the law, a Pharisee;<sup>6</sup>  
as to zeal, a persecutor of the church;  
as to righteousness under the law, blameless.*

*<sup>7</sup> But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.*

**WE TRUST ONLY IN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT COMES FROM GOD  
AND IS BY FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS.**

**WHAT SINS? WHAT AMENDS? WHAT CHANGES? REPENT OF  
WHAT? Ready?**

Verse 5 – if you execute justice with one another. Treating people right.

Verse 6 – not oppress the sojourner. (treating immigrants and new people  
right)

Verse 6 – the fatherless (treating helpless children right)

Verse 6 – the widow (helping women who have lost their husband or are  
powerless)

Verse 6 – shed innocent blood (protecting the lives of the innocent from  
murder)

Verse 6 – go after other gods (any form of false worship or idols, or serving  
any God except for the one true and living God)

Verse 7 – then you can stay in the holy land.

Verse 8, “*Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail.*”

Their theological beliefs are not resulting in good lives, because their  
theological beliefs were false, and they were deceived.

How did Jeremiah know? EASY. Jeremiah took one look at their lives.

Verses 9-11, “*Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make  
offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, 10 and then  
come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, ‘We  
are delivered!’—only to go on doing all these abominations? 11 Has this house,  
which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I  
myself have seen it, declares the Lord.*”

We have a word for this: a fake.

**Ten Commandments**

1 – no other gods – broken.

2 – make no idols – broken, they made offerings to the false god Baal.

3 – not take God’s name in vain – broken, by profaning temple that bore the  
Lord’s name. Chanting, “the temple of the LORD” is misusing the Lord’s own  
name, three times.

4 – honor the Sabbath day – broken, they gave false worship.

5 – honor father and mother – broken, by not blessing the fatherless and widows.

6 – not murder – broken, see verse 9.

7 – not commit adultery – broken, see verse 9.

8 – not steal – broken, see verse 9.

9 – not bear false witness – broken, see verse 9.

10 – not covet, broken, they wanted what the other nations had, namely their gods.

God says, after listing in verse 9 all the commandments that they broke, in Verse 10, God says, “*and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, ‘We are delivered!’—only to go on doing all these abominations?*”

How can we go on a spiritual crime spree, and then use the worship hall as our Sunday hideout?

Is God on to us in verse 11, “*Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the Lord.*”

Sounds familiar, ‘den of robbers’. Where have we heard that? Jesus! Jesus walked into a temple, in Jerusalem, where there were shady business dealings. What did Jesus do? Jesus confronted them verbally, and overturned the tables of those making money instead of making disciples. Matthew 21:13, “*He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.”*”

Church-going, without holy living, makes us fakes.

### **3. Let the ruins of Shiloh be a warning to you. (v.12-15)**

Verse 12, “*Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it because of the evil of my people Israel.*”

Jeremiah took the people on a verbal field trip by telling stories of what God did in the past. Shiloh is where God first made His dwelling with the people. Way back in Joshua 18:1, we read, “*the whole congregation of the people of Israel assembled at Shiloh and set up the tent of meeting there....*” Inside the tent of meeting was the ark of the covenant, which showed the earthly presence of Almighty God.

But the people used the ark of the covenant like a lucky charm and actually carted it into battle with them against the Philistines. The ark was then captured on the battlefield, only to be returned when God showed the Philistines how dangerous it is to live in God’s presence embodied in the ark. That story is told in 1 Samuel chapters 4-6. The ark was not returned to Shiloh. The ark was taken to Beth Shemesh, and then the ark was taken to Kiriath Jearim, where David later found it and David brought the ark up to Jerusalem. 2 Samuel 6:2.

Why would Jeremiah tell that story here? Because Shiloh was only a pile of rubble that used to be the temple. Because the people in the temple in Jerusalem thought that such a disaster would never happen to them. They kept saying, “The temple of The LORD, the temple of The LORD...”

The downfall of churches happens to liberals, but it would never happen to conservatives, would it? The coming apart of denominations happens to broadly evangelical denominations, but it would never happen to a Reformed denomination, would it?

The people could not conceive of the temple being destroyed.

But they were wrong.

Verses 13-15, “*And now, because you have done all these things, declares the Lord, and when I spoke to you persistently you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer, 14 therefore I will do to the house that is called by my name, and in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you and to your fathers, as I did to Shiloh. 15 And I will cast you out of my sight, as I cast out all your kinsmen, all the offspring of Ephraim.*”

The ruins of Shiloh served as a museum of healthy reminders.

Do we have any Shiloh’s today? Reminders of things gone by.

Read the early history of Princeton Seminary, and Harvard University, and Yale, and Oxford, and the divinity schools of each, you will hear the echoes of Shiloh. God used to be there, and the pastors and missionaries that were trained there went out and changed America, and the world.

How about churches that used to be on fire for God? Quite a list.

Places where our brothers and sisters in the Lord gathered to hear the Word of God, and to be fed spiritually, and to give praise to God in the name of Jesus Christ alone. Places where the whole counsel of God was preached with passion. What is stated this Sunday across those very same pulpits in those very same buildings? The holy and living God is worshipped there no longer, and His word is not feared and craved there. His gospel is not heard there. We need a reformation. We need a whole slew of Jeremiah’s.

Vast cathedrals built with the money of the tithes and sacrificial love offerings of our fathers and mothers in the faith, now are ghost towns for anyone with a true faith. Not to fear. God is worshipped nearby. God is worshipped not in the beauty of the temple or the cathedral, but God is worshipped in Spirit.

### **Conclusion:**

Love the truth of God’s Word.

Jeremiah’s point here was that there was something people were convinced that they could rely on, but they were deceived. It was a dangerous deception, because of the false sense of security.

The ark of the covenant was moveable, and even lamps on lampstands of churches are moveable.

This is why we don't trust denominations or even in larger movements such as the Reformed Faith arising out of the Reformation. Once great truths can turn into deceptions when they generate a security that is not grounded in a living and obedient relationship to God.

We trust in Christ alone, who is the truth. We love Christ, who is the truth. We are saved by grace alone.

It is not about the gain or loss of buildings. It is not about federation of churches, and denominational structures.

The perseverance of God's people depends daily on God's grace.

God is faithful to us by His grace, and so we are called to worship God in truth, and we will not become a Shiloh.

We don't focus on church buildings. We need to always be reforming, always be repenting, always be coming back to God our Savior.

Love the truth of God's Word.