

# The Great Evils

By Bill Parker

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**Bible Text:** Jeremiah 2:13  
**Preached on:** Sunday, August 7, 2011

**Eager Avenue Grace Church**  
1102 Eager Dr.  
Albany, Ga. 31707

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Let's open our Bibles to the book of Jeremiah chapter two. My text for this message is verse 13 of Jeremiah chapter two where the Lord thought the prophet Jeremiah brings a complaint against Israel or specifically Judah, the southern kingdom of Judah and he says, "For my people," that is his covenant people under the law, the old covenant. It refers to national Israel during that 1500 year period of time which is known as the old covenant and that old covenant that was abolished by the coming of Christ and the establishment of all that... all righteousness for his people.

And he says, "For my people have committed two evils."

Now the title of this message is "Two Great Evils." And when you read that, that is kind of strange, isn't it? Two evils? Could you imagine coming before God at judgment and him looking at you and saying, "Well, you have committed two sins"? Especially in light of what the Scripture teaches us about the reality of sin and what we are by nature, sinners in need of salvation by grace, sinners who have no hope in ourselves, that not only have we committed two sins, we have committed sin after sin after sin, a multitude of sin. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

The Bible says in Romans chapter five and verse 20, "Where sin abounded..." And, literally that is the picture there is like a person drowning in a sea or in a flood. And that is what it... that is the reality of sin for us by nature that we are drowning in a sea of sin.

And then in John chapter 16 and verse, I think it is verse nine, he talks about the Holy Spirit's convicting work. He said he will convict us of sin. That is the first three things he mentions there, of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. And he says, "I will convict you of sin..." He will convict us of sin because we believe not on Christ and that is... and some people say, "Well, that is talking about the sin of unbelief."

Well, it is, but it is talking about more than that. What it is saying literally is that without Christ I am nothing but sin. That is the situation. Everything about me is sin. Even my best, the Bible says in Psalm, I think 39. I am not sure if I have got the reference right. It says man at his best state is altogether vanity, worthless. So even man without Christ, man at his best without Christ, man at his most moral, dedicated and religious without Christ is what? S I N.

So when you read this he says, “For my people have committed two evils,” what is the context? What is he talking?

Well, these two evils, these two great evils encompasses all evil. That is what he is saying. It is not that they just committed two sins. They committed a multitude of sins. We have committed a multitude of sin. No way we can count such things. And without Christ the only one who keeps account of it is God.

But as we stand in Christ, we who know him, who are washed in his blood, clothed in his righteousness, there is no accounting of sin. For who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? That is what the Scripture says.

But he says, “For my people have committed two sins, two evils, two great evils.”

Well, what have they done? Here they are. Verse 13. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters. They have forsaken the Lord. They have forsaken Jehovah, God our salvation. They have forsaken Christ. For that whole law was given for that purpose to lead them to Christ, Galatians chapter three tells us. That is why the law was given, to expose their sinfulness and to show them their need of salvation by grace through the Lord Jesus Christ who they saw as the promised Messiah.

Well, they have forsaken the fountain of living waters. And then, secondly, here is the second. And hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

Now what is that? Well, that is anything that men and women hope in, trust in or think recommends them unto God other than Christ, other than his blood and righteousness.

For whatever you take comfort in as far as your salvation other than Christ and him crucified, let me tell you something. It is a broken cistern that cannot hold water, period. Now that is what they did.

And those two evils encompass every. For without Christ everything about me and in me and by me is sin. And without Christ anything I trust in, anything I take pride in, anything I take peace in, is totally a broken cistern that cannot hold water.

Look back up at verse eight. He says here the priest, now the priests were the spiritual leaders of that nation. Really, if you think about it, as they go through the old covenant, the way it was set up and established, the king, he was to be the spiritual leader of the nation, but usually those kings failed. Remember when the kingdom was divided the northern kingdom then their existence, they had kings, but they did not have one godly king who led them in the ways of the Lord. They were idolatrous evil kings in the northern kingdom.

By this time Jeremiah... this is 600 years before Christ. And by this time all the northern kingdom was gone. It was already destroyed and carried away.

In the southern kingdom you had a few godly kings. You can obviously think of David, King David. He was a sinner saved by the grace of God, but he is listed as a godly king. You had Solomon. Again, a sinner saved by the grace of God. But then after that in the southern kingdom of Judah you had very few who were godly kings. In fact, before Jeremiah there was Manasseh. He was one of the most wicked kings of Judah. He reigned 55 years. He brought idolatry into the land. And then his son Amon began to reign. He only reigned two years because he got assassinated and then Josiah come along and he tried to bring reforms into the land. He was a godly king, but his work only went so far and after he died then it went right back to where it is talking about here.

So you had the king who was supposed to be the spiritual leader, but they failed. You had the prophets. Of course, Jeremiah was a prophet during this time. And then you had the priests. Jeremiah was a prophet and a priest.

But listen to what he says in verse eight. He says, “The priests said not, Where is the LORD? Where is Jehovah?” God’s covenant name, God’s name that identifies and distinguishes him as the God of grace. That is what the Lord is here.

You see, calling upon the name of the Lord. Well, what is his name? What is he like? I think it was brother Shepherd who preached that message here calling upon the name of the Lord. That was a great message, because he showed there that God established way back in Genesis what it is to call upon the name of the Lord. It is not just looking up into the sky and saying, “Lord.” It is not just repeating a prayer. It is calling upon him by sacrifice.

Because you remember when God established sacrifice there in Genesis three when he removed those fig leaf aprons from Adam and Eve which represented the works of man trying to cover his own nakedness, his own shamedness and he slew an animal. I believe it was a lamb, because without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. Justice must be satisfied. Righteousness must be established or sin cannot be forgiven. He killed an animal, shed blood and he made them coats of skin which is an emblem of the imputed righteousness of Christ.

So what is it to call upon the [?]. How did Abel call upon him? He brought a lamb of sacrifice. How did Noah worship the Lord when he got off the ark? He built an altar. What is the altar for? For sacrifice. How did Abraham call upon the name of the Lord? By sacrifice? How do we call upon the name of the Lord? By sacrifice though the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. You see?

But the priest here, he said, they said, “Not where is the Lord?” They didn’t... they weren’t looking of the Lord, the God who justifies the ungodly. They that handle the law knew me not. Do you see that? They handled the law. They were the masters of the law. But they didn’t know God.

“The pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit, do not save.”

They imagined they were law keepers. They weren't. Why was the law given? To show them their sin, Romans chapter five and verse 20, Galatians chapter three, that the transgression may be obvious.

So that they would understand that no sinner can be justified before God, can be forgiven, pardoned, made righteous before God by their law keeping.

In the days of our Lord the Jews boasted, the unbelieving Jews boasted in basically three things that they thought recommended them unto God. Number one was their physical connection with Abraham. We are Abraham's children.

Christ told them. He said, “If you were Abraham's spiritual children, you would do the works of Abraham.”

What did Abraham do? He believed God. He believed the Lord here. He believed salvation by grace. He looked forward to the coming Messiah.

John chapter eight he said, “Abraham rejoiced to see my day. He saw it and he was glad.”

Number two, their circumcision. The circumcision of the males was emblematic of the whole family and they boasted in that. But he said... Paul wrote in Galatians chapter three, “God forbid that I should glory save in the what? The cross, the finished work of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the blood of Christ by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world. For in Christ neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision.”

It means nothing. That is what he said. But a new creation. What is that new creation? That is the sinner saved by the grace of God in Christ. So that didn't get it.

And the third thing they boasted in is their law keeping. We keep the law.

Turn over to John chapter five with me. Now in all of that what is happening when an unbeliever boasts or takes comfort or assurance in their physical connection with Abraham or their circumcision or their law keeping? What are they doing? To be exact, they are committing two great evils. They are forsaking Christ, the fountain of living waters. And they are hewing out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

Look at John chapter five and verse 39.

Christ speaking to the Pharisees here. He said, “Search the Scriptures for in them you think you have eternal life and they are they which testify of me.”

What Scriptures do you think he is talking about? He is talking about the Old Testament

Scriptures, the law, the prophets, the psalms. That is what he told his disciples in the book of Luke when he sat them down and taught them out of Moses and the prophets and the psalms the things concerning himself.

And he says in verse 40, “You will not come to me that you might have life. I receive not honor from men, but I know you, that you have not the love of God in you. I am come in my father’s name and you receive me not. If another shall come in his own name, him you will receive. How can you believe which receive honor one of another and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?”

Now that honor that comes from God only, how does that honor come? It comes through Christ.

“This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”

It doesn’t come [?]. If you are seeking honor from God because you think you keep the law, you will get no honor from God there because you fall short, I fall short. Now you may receive honor from men. Now men will look at you and they will applaud you, but not God. Look at what he says in verse 45. How do you know that? Look at verse 45.

“Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. That is one that accuseth you, even Moses in whom you trust.”

Now they didn’t trust in the person of Moses. They trusted in the law of Moses, their law keeping. That is what he is saying.

He says, “For had you believed Moses, you would have believed me for he wrote of me.”

Moses didn’t teach you to keep the law in order to be saved or in order to be recommended unto God. he wrote of Christ. That if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words?

Now back here in Jeremiah two that is what he is saying. These priests, they didn’t say, “Where is the Lord?” Those that handled the law knew me not. They don’t know what the law was for. The law wasn’t for salvation. It never was.

God didn’t give Israel the law to be saved by its precepts. It was given to expose their sin and to drive them to Christ, the fountain of the living waters. It is what Christ said to the woman at the well. Do you remember? He said, “If you knew the gift of God.” Do you remember that?

Turn over to John chapter four. Look at that just a moment.

And, you know, this is the problem. This is the problem with man by nature. Here is what we don’t know. I want to parallel this with another passage, but look at John

chapter four. Remember he is talking to the woman at the well and she asked... he asked for a drink.

Verse 10. Look at John four and verse 10.

He says, "Jesus answered and said unto her, if thou knewest the gift of God and who it is that saith to thee give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him and he would have given thee living water."

Now the key there is if you knew the gift of God. What is the gift of God?

You know, there in 1 Corinthians chapter two, you don't have to turn there, it talks about the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them of they are spiritually discerned. Well, back up in verse 12 of 1 Corinthians two it says this. It talks about we receive the things of the Spirit. We know the things that are freely given of God.

See, that is man by nature. He doesn't know the gift of God. We don't know the gift of God. We think salvation in some way is conditioned on ourselves. We don't see all of salvation as a free gift. That is why false gospels even today, they have to interject the works, the law keeping of man somewhere into the mix in order to attain or maintain salvation. Why? Because by nature we don't know the gift of God. What is the gift of God?

Well, the Scripture speaks of the gift of Christ himself. He is the gift of God.

In fact, in Romans chapter eight it says, "If God gave us his Son, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?"

In Christ we have all things. In Christ we have all salvation. In Christ we have all righteousness. Not by...

See, righteousness doesn't come by my keeping the law. It comes by his keeping the law. In Christ we have all eternal life and glory in Christ. He is the fountain of living water and he says here... Look at verse 13 of John four.

He says, "Jesus answered and said unto her, whosoever drinketh of this water shall never thirst again."

You drink of the water of man's works you will thirst again. You will have to do it again. You have to keep going, keep on, keep on, you know. But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.

That is the issue. The law was given to drive them to Christ.

But in Jeremiah he said they committed two great evils. They have forsaken the fountain of living waters and hewed them out cisterns, broken cistern that can have no water.

Now, we could spend a lot of time going through the Old Testament, but let me turn to a Scripture that summarizes the whole thing. Turn to Romans chapter nine and look at verse 31. And that is what I am saying now. Those two evils, they encompass all evils, because, my friend, if we don't have Christ as our substitute, as our righteousness, as our forgiveness. If we don't stand before God washed in the blood of Christ, we are nothing but sin. Everything we have done it is sin upon sin upon sin.

Look at verse 30 or the verse 31. He is talking about Israel here who followed after the law of righteousness. There is a righteousness revealed in the law. That is what he is saying. It is a perfection that we don't have by nature and cannot gain by our works. But he says Israel followed after. They were zealous trying to be righteous by the law. He says they have not attained to the law of righteousness. They didn't make it. They fell short.

Verse 32. Why? That is what wherefore means. Why. Why didn't they make it? Because they sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law. Now what is it to seek it by faith? Well, listen to what he says. He goes back to the Old Testament. He goes back to the book of Isaiah. And he brings forth a prophecy that Isaiah made by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He says... Look at it again.

“Because they sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law, for they stumbled at that stumbling stone.”

What is that stumbling stone?

“As it is written. Behold I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offence and whosoever believeth on him...

That stumbling stone is a him. It is a person.

“...shall not be ashamed.”

Who is that talking about? It is talking about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now read verse one of chapter 10.

“Brethren, my hearts desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.”

Now what he is talking about here is matters of salvation. Israel is not saved. He is talking about the majority of unbelieving Israel. he is not talking about every individual Israelite here. Paul himself was an Israelite and he was a believer.

But he says, “My heart's desire and prayer for Israel is that they might be saved.”

They are lost. He said, "Now, I bear them record that they have a zeal of God." They are zealous in religion, in seeking God as they see it. But not according to knowledge. They were ignorant.

Now that is what Jeremiah is saying over there in Jeremiah chapter two when he talks about the priest. The priests, remember, he said in chapter two and verse eight he said, "The priest did not say where is the Lord, for they that handled the law knew me not. They were ignorant.

Now what were they ignorant of? Well, look at Romans 10 and verse three. Now what are they ignorant? He says, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, God's requirement, God's judgment, justice and going about to establish their own righteousness."

Now there is the key. That is another way of saying hewing out cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water, trying to establish a righteousness of their own, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

Now, the key to salvation here is submitting to the righteousness of God. What is that? Well, for different people it is different things, isn't it? For some people it is being baptized. For some people it is doing this, that or the other. For some people it is keeping a day. It is doing whatever. But what is it?

Some people say, "Well, it is submitting to Christ, but something else, Christ plus."

Well, listen to what he says in verse four.

"For Christ is the end..."

That word "end" there is a real interesting word. It is the same word that the Lord used on the cross in John 19 and verse 30 when he said, "It is finished." It is translated finished there. Christ is the finishing of something here.

Well, you remember when he was on the cross and he said, "It is finished," and when he gave up the ghost, do you remember what happened? Well, there was a lot of things that happened around that event, didn't it? That is the crux of redemptive history right there, Christ on the cross. But do you remember one specific thing that happened is in the temple. That curtain, that veil that separated the holy place from the holiest of all was torn in two from top to bottom signifying that the way into the holiest of all, the very presence of God was now made nigh by the blood of Christ.

And that is what this is talking about. For Christ is the finishing. It means the completion, the perfection, the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth. Everyone that rests in him and lays hold of him and believes in him.



Matthew chapter five an verse six says, “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness. They will be filled.”

What he is talking about is sinners looking to Christ. And one more. Let’s turn to Hebrews chapter 10. You see, submitting to the righteousness of God is resting in Christ for all salvation, for all forgiveness, for all life, for all glory.

Look at Hebrews chapter 10. Look at verse one. Remember what he said back in Jeremiah two. He said the priests, they don’t say, “Where is the Lord?” They weren’t seeking the Lord. They were seeking something else, someone else. And then those that handled the law, they do not the Lord.

Well, look here. He says in verse one of Hebrews 10. He says, “For the law having a shadow of good things to come...”

Now that is a good description of the law, the law of Moses. It was a shadow of good things to come. In fact, you could say it this way in the context of Hebrews. It was a shadow of better things to come, the law was.

“And not the very image of the things.”

The law itself, there had no salvation in the law itself. That is not why it was given. And he says, “Can never with those sacrifices,” that law was built around that priesthood and those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

Now that word “perfect” is basically the same word “end” in Romans 10:4. Christ is the end of the law.

Well, the old covenant law couldn’t do that. It couldn’t make those who came through its physical sacrifices complete and perfect and righteous.

He says, “For then would they not have cased to be offered.”

In other words, if those sacrifices could have made the worshipper perfect, they wouldn’t have to continually be offered, because that the worshippers once purged, once cleansed should have no more conscience of sins. That is no more guilt.

When it says “no more conscience of sin” that doesn’t mean that they wouldn’t remember that they are sinners or they wouldn’t be aware of sinners. That is not the word “conscious” it is “conscience.” See it there? What it is talking about is the convicting of the conscience. You see, in Christ I stand before God complete and perfect tin him, not in myself, but in Christ. I have his righteousness imputed, charged, accounted to me. And god will not charge me with my sins. Why? Because Christ is my substitute.

And somebody said, “Well, how far can you take it?”

Well, in God's sight legally there is no sin charged to his people. Somebody... and, of course, you know what unbelievers do with that?

You know, they say, "Well, that may well... if that is the case, then I will just go sin as much as I want to."

No, you don't know Christ. The grace of God in the heart of a sinner looking to Christ and so he said they would have no more conscience, no more guilt, legal guilt. It has been satisfied. The debt has been paid.

Verse three.

"But in this sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year."

Those were a continual reminder of the guilt of sin.

"For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore, when he cometh, when Christ cometh into the world he saith sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, those animal sacrifices God wouldn't have them as far as salvation is concerned. But a body hast though prepared me."

That is the humanity of Christ which he united with his deity. He is God man.

And he says, "In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure, no satisfaction. Then said I Lo I come in the volume of the book it is written of me."

The volume, that is that book, that is that seven sealed book that Revelation speaks of. That is the book of God's purposes, the book of God's will. And this is God's will from the very beginning to send Christ into the world to save his people from their sin.

He says, "It is written of me to do thy will, oh God, above when he said, "Sacrifice and offering and burnt offering and offerings for sin thou wouldest not..."

Those animal sacrifices, see.

"...neither has pleasure therein which are offered by the law. Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, oh God. He taketh away the first, that is the old covenant law, that is taken away that he may establish the second, that is the new covenant brought in by the death of Christ."

He says in verse 10, "By the which will we are sanctified, set apart through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once."

"And for all" there is added by the translators. It wasn't in the original.

What he is talking about here is that all those animal blood sacrifices over a whole... all that time in the Old Testament could never take away sin, could never bring in righteousness, could never make the sinner perfect before God. But the one sacrifice of Christ was enough to accomplish it all for everyone whom he represented on the cross.

And without him all we are is a broken cistern. You can patch it up, paint it up, try to fill it up with religion, whatever you think will make you acceptable before God. But it will hold no water. No water at all.

See, we need something that will hold water. We need someone who will hold water. We need he who is the water of life.

Look down at verse 18. Well, look at verse 17 of Hebrews 10. Right there in the verses I didn't read there he is talking about how that salvation of the sinner not in that law, but in what Christ accomplished in bringing in the new covenant.

And he says in verse 17, "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

What is he talking about? He is talking about he won't hold them against us. That is what that means. God will not hold our sins against us if we have Christ as our hope, if we look to him alone and rest in him alone. He is our righteousness. He is our forgiveness. He is our sabbath. He is all things to a believer.

And he says in verse 18, "Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin."

For Christ has put it away. There is nothing else to offer for sin. Oh, we offer unto God the thanksgiving, the sacrifices of thanksgiving and obedience and gratitude and love, worship and praise, but that is not to put away sin. That is not to make us righteous before God. Because where remission of those sins are, there is no more offering.

So verse 19.

"Having, therefore, brethren, boldness..."

That word "boldness" means liberty, freedom, free access. It means confidence.

"... to enter into the holiest."

Remember the high priest went into the holiest once a year with the blood of the lamb. Well, that was a picture. That was a shadow of something better to come. Everything about that law was a shadow of something better to come. All of these sacrifices, the priesthood, the tabernacle, the sabbath days, all of those were shadows of something better to come so that we enter the holiest how? Not by the blood of animals, but by the blood of Jesus, Jehovah, our Savior, by a new and living way, not an old and dead way, which he hath consecrated, which Christ hath accomplished.

See, this is a way that you and I have nothing to do with accomplishing. Christ accomplished it for us as our substitute and sin bearer through the veil. Remember that veil rent in two? Torn from top to bottom.

That is to say his flesh by the sacrifice of himself. And having an high priest over the house of God, that is the Church of God, God's elect out of every tribe, kindred, tongue and nation. Let us draw near with a true heart. That true heart here is an honest heart. The true heart is a sincere heart. The true heart is a heart broken, convicted over sin. Knowing it is the heart of a person who knows that he has no right to come into the holiest by anything but the blood of Christ.

In full assurance of faith. What is full assurance of faith? Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. Having our heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, a legal, guilty conscience and our bodies washed with pure water, cleansed with the blood of Christ.

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for he is faithful that promised.

Now all of that is just a commentary on what the prophet Jeremiah wrote back here in Jeremiah chapter two 600 years before Christ.

“My people have committed two evils,” he said.

What have they done? They have forsaken the God of all grace. They have forsaken his Messiah, his way of salvation, his way of cleansing, his way of forgiveness, his way of righteousness. And they have hewed out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water. Their works, their ways, their thoughts. They won't do.

My friend, our only hope is to rest in this one who finished that great work and drink from the fountains of living water, Christ and him crucified.