

A Heart on Fire

Jeremiah was a prophet of God, but that doesn't mean he was immune to discouragement and frustration. While he sought to help his people by preaching the Word of God, he was constantly met with rejection and persecution. No matter how passionately he preached, the people didn't want to listen. Sometimes, they went so far as ridiculing him, threatening him, and even persecuting him. At a certain point Jeremiah felt like just being quiet was the best option. Surely we feel that way sometimes. We invite people to church and they never show up. We study Bible doctrines with folks, but they refuse to abide by the truth. We try and help people, and they ignore us, reject us, and maybe even turn against us. Sometimes we may be tempted to give up and just be quiet. Jeremiah felt this way too, but he could never feel that way for long.

He says in 20:9, *"If I say, 'I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,' there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary of holding it in, and I cannot."* What an amazing man! Yes, he felt discouraged, but his love for God and God's Word was stronger than any setback. For many Christians, it is all too easy to hold back the truth of God's Word. For Jeremiah, not preaching God's Word caused an inward pain. It felt like a trapped fire in his heart and bones. While many people are all too comfortable being quiet, holding back wore Jeremiah out, until he simply couldn't do it any longer, and he had to speak God's Word. What if we developed that type of love for God, His Word, and the souls of others? What if *not* speaking the truth of the Bible became more difficult than keeping it quiet and hidden? Let us seek to be more like Jeremiah—men and women with hearts on fire for God and His Word!



"That You May Grow Thereby..."

A weekly Bible reading plan



Jeremiah 13-24

Jeremiah vs. the Lying Prophets

Overview

Jeremiah chapters 13-24 continue the prophet's message to the nation of Judah. Despite all God had done for the Jewish people, the nation persisted in rebellion and idolatry. They forsook God and chased after foreign gods such as Baal—which the Lord equated to spiritual adultery. Social life was just as bad. Oppression was common, and care of orphans, widows, foreigners, and the poor was neglected. Worse still, the nation's idolatry had led them to partake in child sacrifice, something so disdained by God He emphasizes how foreign it is to His commands by saying, *"...I did not command or decree, nor did it come into my mind"* (7:31, 19:5). The nation's rebellion had gone so far, that its fate was sealed. Most of God's warnings called people to turn back, but Judah reached a point where judgment was certain. God said, *"though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my heart would not turn toward this people"* (15:1), showing just how far gone the nation was. The people hated Jeremiah's message of judgment, so they rejected it and persecuted him. While God's promise of judgment is severe, it is mingled with a message of hope. God's promises will not be thwarted by Judah's rebellion and punishment. There will be a remnant that is righteous and that will be saved. However bad mankind gets, we can always trust God's promises will prevail in the end, and the righteous will be saved.

Suggested Reading Schedule

Monday: Jeremiah 13-14

Tuesday: Jeremiah 15-16

Wednesday: Jeremiah 17-19

Thursday: Jeremiah 20-22

Friday: Jeremiah 23-24

Questions:

1. What two prophets does God mention in chapter 15? What does this passage show concerning Judah's sin? _____

2. What does Jeremiah say he did with God's words, and what did they become (ch. 15)? _____

3. Compare the man who trusts in himself and the man who trusts in God (17:5-8). _____

4. "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be _____; _____ and I shall be saved, For you are my _____." (NKJV)
5. What two things does God compare His Word to in Jeremiah 23? _____

6. Which group of people had God set His eyes on for good (ch. 24)? _____

In Jeremiah, God uses various methods to communicate His judgment. Sometimes He simply tells Jeremiah what to preach. Other times, He instructs Jeremiah either through visions or by commanding him to do something, and then uses the experience to teach a lesson of judgment. Here are a few such "picture lessons" that are found in this week's reading.

- The Ruined Loincloth (13:1-11)
- Jars filled with wine (13:12-14)
- The Potter and the Clay (18:1-11)
- The Broken Flask (19:1-15)
- The Baskets of Figs (24:1-10)

Lying Prophets

One of Jeremiah's chief problems was self-proclaimed prophets who contradicted his words while claiming they spoke for the Lord. While Jeremiah preached judgment and the need to repent, they preached peace and safety, giving the people a false sense of security. These false-prophets hated Jeremiah and his message, so they persecuted him. Today, we should learn a few lessons from this:

- (1) Don't trust everyone that claims to be speaking God's will. Compare their teachings with God's Word to ensure they don't lead you astray. (23:28)
- (2) Always speak the truth, no matter how many people teach or follow false doctrine.
- (3) Expect persecution. Those who stay true to God and His Word have always faced persecution by those who prefer falsehood. God will deliver the faithful in the end.

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