

A Question For The Beginning • Jeremiah 5:30-31

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Visitors & The Radio

1. Each Sunday, we have quite a few visitors
2. Often times they are here because they have heard our radio program which airs at 9:30 on Sunday mornings on KDAR.
3. We've discovered that we have a pretty good sized and faithful audience for the program
4. And many of those who listen are members of other churches who listen to our program as they get ready for and drive to church.
5. After listening for a while, they get curious to see what we're like, so while they're still committed to their church, they'll visit us on a Sunday or Wednesday evening just to check us out.
6. We always appreciate the calls and visits from people who listen to the program
7. Most say that they tune in because they love the way we go through the Bible.
 - a. we *read* the text,
 - b. *explain* what it means in simple terms,
 - c. and then make it *relevant* to today by *applying* it to our lives

B. To Those

1. Normally, the program we air on a Sunday morning is the same message given here the week before
2. So today's message is going to be aired next week – I think
3. But what's different about today's message is this:
4. While I usually address the study to the family here at Calvary, today, I want to address the message to those who are visiting, to the radio audience, and to anyone who is listening to this on one of the many tapes we send out
5. Now, that doesn't mean those of you who are members here can take a nap
6. It may be that you have a relative or a friend to whom these words may be especially applicable
7. Or you may find that they are applicable to *you*.

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 30-31

³⁰ “An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land:

³¹ The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their *own* power; and My people love *to have it so*. But what will you do in the end?

1. As usual, we must set the scene for our text
2. Beginning with v. 20, Jeremiah is told by the Lord to declare God's word to the people of Israel
 - a. they have become spiritually deaf and dumb because they have willingly

- turned their back on God
- b. their disobedience and rebellion have resulted in the moral ruin of the nation
- c. and that ruin will soon end in the *physical* destruction of their society
- 3. In vs. 26-29, God speaks against the rich and powerful who increase their wealth at the expense of the poor and defenseless
 - a. they are corrupt men who put more value on their pocketbook than on the value of human life
 - b. for their perversions, God will bring judgment
- 4. In vs. 30-31, God turns to those who had been entrusted with the spiritual oversight of the nation.
 - a. after surveying the moral wreckage of the kingdom of Judah,
 - b. He expresses His astonishment that the very ones whose task it was to be the *moral backbone* of the nation have become a part of the perversion.
- 5. Notice the *surprise* in v. 30 . . .

30 “An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land:

- a. God is *omnipresent* – meaning He is everywhere present
- b. He is also *omniscient* – He knows *all* things
- c. He sees and knows *everything*
 - 1) there is *nothing* done in secret as far as He is concerned
 - 2) He knows all about the dark and hidden things that men and women try to keep from the knowledge of others,
 - 3) the shameful acts, the corruption, the perversion, the debauchery
 - 4) He sees and knows it all
- d. so it comes as a bit of a surprise that God would express *astonishment* and *horror* at something
- e. what is it that *astonishes* Him so?
- f. what is it that God considers *horrific*?
- 6. There are three things:
 - a. First: “The prophets prophesy falsely, “
 - 1) The role of the prophet was a simple one; their job was *not* complex
 - 2) They were to proclaim the Word of God *faithfully*
 - 3) But the prophets of Jeremiah’s day were proclaiming another word, a different message from the one God gave them
 - 4) From Chronicles and Kings, as well as later in Jeremiah, we learn that Jeremiah’s fellow prophets were telling the people that everything was fine
 - 5) They were saying that God was pleased with them and that they would continue to prosper
 - 6) When Jeremiah came along with a message different from theirs, they opposed him and abused him
 - 7) These false prophets had discovered that a negative message of judgment didn’t attract a very large following
 - 8) People don’t want to hear bad news; they don’t like being told they need to repent
 - 9) They want to maintain a positive self-image and believe that their future is bright

- 10) So they tend to *reject* the message of *repentance* and *reward* those with a sunny and bright outlook on the future
 - 11) The prophets tailored their message to their audience – and told the people what they wanted to hear.
 - 12) When young Jeremiah came along with a genuine word from the Lord, they opposed him and tried to shut him up because they didn't want the people asking questions about why there was a difference in the message of the prophets.
 - 13) They dismissed Jeremiah as a nay-sayer; a dark and dreary forecaster of doom who was obviously wrong because he was the minority
 - 14) They, on the other hand, were the majority – so their message *must* be the true one – as though truth is decided by a vote!
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- 15) There are many prophets today claiming to speak for the Almighty
 - 16) The Charismatic community has seen a resurgence of the role of the prophet in the last 10 years – personal prophecy has become big business
 - 17) What seems lacking is the discernment and courage on the part of church leaders and the people at large to hold these prophets accountable for their prophecies
 - 18) Many times a person claims to have a word from the Lord and then the thing doesn't come to pass
 - 19) Instead of being made to answer for their error, they just go on and give more aberrant messages
 - 20) How many times do they have to be wrong to be a false prophet?
Once!
 - 21) There are dozens of these so-called prophets who make the speakers circuit.
 - 22) And long after they should have been ignored, they continue to devastate churches and lives.
 - 23) What's appalling is to hear them give some supposed word from the Lord that clearly contradicts God's Word – and the people who hear it don't even realize it for the error it is.
 - 24) Maybe this is what astonished God
 - a) you see, while the prophets of Jeremiah's day were forecasting blessing
 - b) God's Word had very clearly warned them that rebellion would result in a curse
 - c) but the people were more ready to hear the soothing, false words of man, than the harsh, yet true Word of God.
- b. Second, "The priests rule by their *own* power,"
- 1) The other group of leaders who were supposed to form the moral and spiritual backbone of the nation were the priests
 - 2) No matter what the culture at large was doing, the prophets and priests role was to represent God and bear witness to the world of genuine righteousness
 - 3) The priests got their authority directly from their mission, which was to

represent God

- 4) And as they accurately represented Him, they had tremendous moral power
 - 5) But the priests of Jeremiah's day had forsaken their role of representing God and were only representing *religion*
 - 6) They had turned worship into a *business*; and the temple was their shop
 - 7) They saw themselves as shopkeepers who had a product to sell
 - 8) And they used the force of their own personality, their own charisma to hawk their wares
 - 9) As a result, they lost influence with the people who saw through their charade
 - 10) As the leaders *mislead* the people, the moral authority of the nation was lost
 - 11) And within a short time, the nation went spiritually bankrupt
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- 12) Where does a pastor get his authority? He gets it from his call to be a pastor
 - 13) As long as he is faithful to that call, he has all the authority he needs
 - 14) Now, what is His call, what is the pastor's task? To lead, feed, and protect the flock
 - a) Lead where? Where God directs!
 - b) Feed what? God's Word!
 - c) Protect from what? Predators who would rip them off!
 - 15) Here is the question every Christian has to ask: Is my pastor doing his job?
 - a) is he leading me in the direction God has set or is he leading me according to his own desires
 - b) what's my pastor feeding me? Is it the rich green grass of God's Word or the blighted husks of man's wisdom sprinkled with a sweet coating of humor
 - c) is my pastor looking out for me by warning me of the dangers out there? Is he standing guard over my soul in prayer?
 - 16) Those of you listening on the radio, those of you visiting today, and those of you who call Calvary Chapel your home – all of you need to answer those questions.
 - 17) Does your pastor rule by his *own* authority, by the force of his personality, by his own grand visions of building some religious enterprise, -
 - 18) Or does his authority come because he is being faithful to his call to lead, feed, and protect the flock that belongs to God?
 - 19) It is my conviction that one of the primary reasons why our society is becoming spiritually and morally impoverished is because pastors, for the most part, rule by their own power
 - 20) They've lost their credibility and their moral authority because people see through them
 - 21) Instead of holding fast the Word of Life, they've traded it in for a more acceptable message – something less offensive than the gospel of Christ

- c. Third, and most sadly, what God found astonishing and horrible was “My people love *to have it so*.”
- 1) The prophets were telling lies and the priests were doing their own thing and the people knew it
 - 2) And they loved it!
 - 3) They preferred *fantasy to reality*!
 - 4) And they were willing to pay handsomely for those who would tell them what they *wanted* to hear, rather than what they *needed* to hear.
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- 5) Tell me, who do you think would be elected in America today:
 - a) the candidate who takes a realistic look at our society and says, “We are in trouble and we need to take desperate measures. Morally, we are bankrupt, and economically we are on the verge of collapse. We need a spiritual revival to turn things around. People need to repent of their evil and they need to be more responsible in their finances. If I am elected I will seek to end the use of all credit until we get our economic house in order – I will put an immediate ban on all pornography and the sex industry.”
 - b) or the candidate who says, “While there are some small problems out there, we all know this is a great day of prosperity and plenty. If I am elected, I will seek to ensure that things carry on as usual. Why upset a good thing? No, I will only try to help those who don’t currently enjoy what most others do, the same privileges and prosperity.”
 - 6) We all know who would get elected – the second guy.
 - 7) The first would get a few votes, but most people would vote for the guy who promises them the moon – even if he can’t deliver and they know it
 - 8) Here is what the Apostle Paul said it would be like in the last days, listen to him . . .

The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, [they will not put up with it] but according to their own desires, *because they have itching ears*, they will heap up for themselves teachers; [they will support and promote them] and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. [2 Tim. 4:3-4]

- 9) As it was in the days of Jeremiah, so it will be in the last days
- 10) False prophets and self-promoting pastors will be the darlings of religious people who love it – who lap it up

III. CONCLUSION

A. *The Charge*

1. I want to read the larger context of 2 Timothy 4 in which we find these words of Paul . . .

¹I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead ^oat His appearing and His kingdom:

²Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort,

with all longsuffering and teaching.

³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;*

⁴ and they will turn *their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.*

⁵ But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

2. Paul is clear in his instructions to Timothy – Fulfill your ministry as a true pastor and prophet – PREACH THE WORD!

3. When the people tire of it = Give ‘em more

4. When you start sounding like a broken record, = Preach the Word!

5. When people say, “Enough already!” = Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

6. When they fire you because you won’t tell them what they *want* to hear = endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

7. Why? Look at the last phrase of v. 31

But what will you do in the end?

8. There it is! There is the question.

9. While the prophets prophesied falsely and the priests ruled by their own power and while the people loved it like that – the time would come when the cold hard light of day would break upon their cozy little make-believe world

10. Fantasy would be interrupted by reality

11. Then what would they do since they had based their lives on a lie?

12. Though the prophets said the future was rosy and the priests told the people they were fine, in just a few years, the Babylonians would come and lay waste to their city and deport them out of their land

13. And as they walked to Babylon with a yoke around their neck, they would ask themselves if there was something they could have done to avoid such a terrible fate

B. Where’s It Headed?

1. I am not a prophet – I cannot say what the future holds for this nation

2. What I do know is that Jesus is coming again – but I don’t know when

3. So let’s end this morning by asking the same question

4. What will you do in the end?

5. Where is your spiritual leadership leading you?

a. where are they going?

b. does the pulpit of your church proclaim the Word of God or some other message?

c. are those who speak for the Lord held accountable for what they say?

d. does the pastor represent Jesus or himself, or some other religious celebrity?

6. If things were to go south in this country, are you being prepared to cope with it?

a. are you falling more in love with Jesus?

b. are you being conformed to His image?

- c. are you growing in relationship with others in the Body of Christ?
- d. is your mind being renewed by the Word and Spirit of God?
- 7. If any of these question make you uncomfortable because your church or your pastor seems to come short – then pray!
- 8. Ask the Lord to effect a change in your church and your pastor.
- 9. And if that change doesn't come quickly – then what else can you do?
- 10. What ought you do?

C. To The Lost

- 1. What will you do in the end?
- 2. And end is coming you know
- 3. Most people live their lives as if there was no end
- 4. And only too late, while confined to a sick-bed, do they stop to consider eternity
- 5. You *are* going to live forever – the only question is, where will you spend eternity, in heaven, or hell?
- 6. Here's what I and many here today are going to do in the end; we are going to put our hands in the hand of Jesus and He is going to lead us into eternal glory
- 7. But that is a decision that is made now
- 8. How about you?