

# What shalt thou say

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] We may now turn to words in the chapter we read together in Jeremiah, chapter 13 and verse 20.

We shall again read that verse 20. Jeremiah chapter 13. Lift up your eyes and behold them that come from the north. Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?

What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee? For thou hast taught them to be captains and thus chief over thee. Shall not sorrows take thee as a woman in travail?

The words on which I would like to base our thoughts this evening for a little, are the words at the beginning of verse 21. Jeremiah 13, verse 21.

What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee? What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee?

[ 1 : 1 2 ] Now I hope all of us understand, to some extent anyway, the historical setting of these words of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 13, verse 21. That we all understand that Jeremiah, with others of the prophets, were sent forth by God in their generation to warn a sinful, backsliding, God-forsaking people.

And to warn them against, in our word, to warn them against punishment. To warn them regarding punishment.

Because they were provoking God. And God, through Jeremiah, was foretelling these people that punishment was inescapable for them.

That was the burden of Jeremiah's message. When other prophets were trying to console the people, trying to lessen their fears concerning the future, Jeremiah was sent as a true prophet of God foretelling that punishment was coming their way inevitably.

[ 3 : 0 9 ] You remember that the special form that punishment was to take in their particular experience was in their being taken captive into a foreign land.

And that they were to remain there for 70 long years to them before a remnant of them would be restored again to their own land and to Jerusalem.

They were a people who were to undergo great sufferings before many years were to pass. And it is strange how in that generation so many people not only despised Jeremiah for the message he preached, but despised him to the point where his own villagers, you might say, sought to take away his life, the people of Anathos, to which Jeremiah belonged, sought to take away his life purely because of his faithfulness to the message that God gave him to deliver in their midst.

And tonight, we shall see first of all how punishment is something that is inescapable for sinners who continue in impenitence against all God's dealings with them.

God is a just God. And there is one particular falsehood that is very prevalent, I think, in people's minds in our own day.

[ 5 : 1 6 ] And that is the falsehood that we can be less concerned about the severity of God because we are living in New Testament times.

And because we are living in New Testament times, we are living in the day of God's grace. We are living after God has sent his son into the world.

and after the work of salvation for all the world has been accomplished, in days when we know that the Lord Jesus Christ has been exalted to the right hand of God, and when God reveals his mercy and his grace throughout the whole wide world in so far as his own word goes forth and is being translated into the languages of mankind on the earth.

Now, these are days of grace and days of rich grace. But the falsehood against which I would warn you tonight is this falsehood that because we are living in days of the revelation of the riches of God's grace that we can forget about the severity of God.

And what I would like myself to understand better and be able to impress upon your own mind is the opposite truth, that because the riches of God's grace have become more manifest, we should remember the severity of God better and be able to apply that aspect of the glory of God in our own daily living in a way that Old Testament the saints could not.

[ 7 : 52 ] Now that may sound strange to our own ears but I think it is the truth. And one of the main reasons why I believe it to be true is this, that at the very place and in the experience of the very passion in that place who brought to light the riches of the love and grace of God there was brought to light also the severity of God as the judge of all the earth.

I hope you understand that I am referring to the death of God's own Son. God's God's God's God's Son.

And have you understood that not only is the cross of Christ the very brightness of the revelation of the love of God in this world towards sinners but it is also the brightest exhibition of the severity of God as judge who must punish sin.

Men have experienced the beginnings of punishment in this world. God was careful to keep on record that fact in the history of his people.

You remember how a whole generation experienced the severity of the wrath of God in the days of Noah when every living creature on the face of the earth was destroyed because God must punish sin.

[ 9 : 59 ] Except Noah and his wife and his three sons and his three sons' wives who were saved by means of the ark. You remember that a whole nation if not a whole generation experienced God's punishment upon sin time after time when God had sent his servant Moses to deliver his people Israel from the land of Egypt.

Ten times he made the land of Egypt to suffer punishment for sin in order that they might be led or that a ruler pharaoh might be led to repentance.

thousands and then you remember that the military might of that land was destroyed in the Red Sea suddenly again because God is angry with sinners and must punish sin.

You remember how certain cities in their totality came under the wrath of God because of sin because of a sin that is crying for God's judgment upon many in our land and in other lands tonight a sin that has brought God's judgment in the form of a not so slow death upon many poor souls. You remember how cities were demolished by fire and brimstone from heaven the cities of the plain Sodom and Gomorrah because of the sin that is known by the very name of one of those cities.

[ 11 : 53 ] God is angry with sinners every day and you remember how the city of Jerusalem many many generations later a city that had rejected Christ how it was destroyed totally how its inhabitants as perhaps you have heard before were put to death so many of them that the Roman army could find no more timber wood to make crosses on which to hang the dwellers of Jerusalem who had rejected Christ who had come to them revealing the love of God as it had never been revealed before and you surely you can see in that particular experience in God's providence a demonstration a very special demonstration of the truth that I mentioned at the beginning regarding the severity of God's judgment upon sin so very near to the revelation of God's grace and love in the death of his son a whole city is destroyed its inhabitants cruelly slaughtered under the same

God who rules in power governing all his creatures and all their actions he does not totally obscure his holiness in its severity against sin even after he has given such a revelation of his love on the cross on which his son died for the salvation of the world we know how individuals have been mocked up such as Herod again after Christ had died for sinners and such as Ananias and Sapphira you remember people into whose hearts Satan came and constrained them to act deceitfully in regard to the things of the kingdom of God and who were suddenly struck down under God's righteous anger for their sin sin and we know that God's punishment is inflicted on people at the point of their death you remember one of the parables spoken by the Lord I think it has special relation to the moment of sinners death he speaks of a rich man and a poor man whose experience in life were so contrary one enjoying luxury living a life of ease and pleasure the other living in poverty the very dogs licking his wounds at the door of the rich man and it is said of the two of them that they died and whereas the poor man's soul was carried by the angels of

God to heaven to Abraham's bosom it is said of the other the rich man that he lifted up his eyes in hell being in torment God's righteous wrath had begun to consume him immediately on the point of his departure from this present life this is going to be made so clear so undeniably clear to all men at the judgment day depart from me oh how often those words of Christ come before my mind when

I tried to preach the gospel it is as if the setting and the scene and the events of the great and solemn and awful day of the Lord were already being exhibited before our eyes the son of man coming in his glory and all the holy angels with him and all nations being gathered before him and he as judge separating the sheep from the goats calling the sheep to his right hand that is the righteous and the goats the unrighteous to his left and while he shall invite the righteous on his right hand to receive and enjoy the kingdom prepared for them before the foundations of the world he shall turn to those on his left declaring to them depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels

God is angry with sinners God hates sin and God shall reveal himself as a terror against unrepentant sinners especially at the great judgment day all we are told whose names were not written in the Lamb's book of life shall be cast into the lake of fire the lake of fire and let us be assured that whatever shall characterize God's punishment of sinners it shall be characterized by justice justice

[ 19 : 08 ] God is just therefore we read a distinction made by the Lord in one of his parables if you read in the gospel according to Luke chapter 12 you will find there the Lord Jesus Christ speaking of a servant who knew his master's will and began to ill treat his fellow servants of a truth I say unto you that he will make him ruler over all that he hath but and if that servant say in his heart my Lord delayeth his coming and shall begin to beat the men servants and maidens and to eat and drink and to be drunken the Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him and at an hour when he is not aware and will cut him in sunder and will appoint him his portion with the unbeliever and that servant which knew his

Lord's will and prepared not himself neither did according to his will shall be beaten with many stripes but he that knew not that is knew not his Lord's will and did commit things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few stripes for unto whom soever much is given of him shall be much required and to whom men have committed much of him they will ask the more and of all the inhabitants of this world in this our generation few if any communities on the earth have received more than we in this island we can compare ourselves in that respect favorably even with some of our neighboring islands in the western isles for we have had the gospel of salvation we have had countless ordinances and services on weekdays and sabbath days and when we shall be called to account God will deal with us justly and if we deserve stripes there is no escaping this that we shall receive many stripes because we have been made to know our Lord's will and woe be unto us if we have not done that will if we have not done that will God is just his punishment will be according to justice and we need not fear any injustice on the part of God and some people question even people who have the name of theologians questioned how enduring would that punishment be can it possibly be true that

God shall make any of his creatures suffer for long for long well anyone who accepts the divine authority of scripture and therefore the strict correctness of what is written in scripture must accept that if heaven is a place of enduring blessedness so hell is a place of enduring torment nothing in the whole of the bible is stated more clearly than that is stated and no one who gave utterance to these truths stated them more clearly than the

Lord Jesus Christ than whom no man ever spoke more graciously men wondered at the grace that flowed from his lips as he spoke the mind of God it is better for the he says to enter into life halt or maimed than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire and the Lord Jesus Christ did not use words incorrectly or untruthfully in order to frighten people he is the truth and he speaks truth and nothing but the truth and these he says shall go into everlasting punishment with everlasting destruction the word speaks of

[ 25 : 54 ] God's punishing of sinners as a banishing a banishment from the presence of God himself and not that that is true in every sense for in hell there are torments that are unbearably painful because of God's holiness consuming sin and sinners and in that sense God is present in the place of war the children of the kingdom with his head shall be cast into utter darkness bind him the Lord said in one of his parables again hand and prove them take him away and cast him into utter darkness there shall be waking and nothing often now the question in our text is this what will thou say when he shall punish him what will thou say and

I suppose the prophet having ministered for long amongst his own generation knew that people would have much to say had he asked them on the spot what did what did they have to say now when they heard of the threat of punishment for their sins he knew that many would find pleas to

make before God reasons why they should be allowed to escape the punishment perhaps due to others for their sins but we have to try and from fair as it were of ourselves in the path to the great judgment day when men are hearing the final sentence denouncing everlasting punishment against themselves what can they say shall one say for example it was not my intention to sin against these it was not my intention it was not my intention to do any evil while

I lived in the world to commit a sin so heinous that it could result in my everlasting damnation well I suppose if you consider for example the generation in which the Lord Jesus Christ was living a generation that crucified him the very people who mocked and reproached him as he died upon the cross no doubt many of them would have said that for most of their lives that they had no intention of committing committing such a thing those of them whose eyes were opened to know the one who was crucified whose very blood was on their hands no doubt many of them would have said never was it my intention to be guilty of such a thing and then no doubt many will say or would say if they could that their sin as far as they knew did no great harm to anyone we know that many are living under that delusion and comforting themselves with that delusion insofar as God's wrath is concerned and any punishment threatened against sin it is not their intention to do harm to anyone they find it difficult to believe that their sins are of any harm to anyone including themselves but it is wise for every one of us to stop from time to time and to think of the possible harm that can be caused by our sins and who knows for example even regarding a sin in thought what harm is caused in the invisible world known only to

God perfectly by the sinful thoughts that pass very often fleetingly through your mind if you were able to assess the heinousness of a sinful thought for example in the presence of a worshipping assembly of people as it is assessed by God in the place of holiness where the people are gathered in his name and a sinful thought enters your heart and you entertain that thought in your heart and you let it dwell in your heart and it persists in your heart and mind influencing yourself if not as far as you know influencing anyone else but who knows what harm is being done by a sinful thought and I hope before some of us grow very old that we shall learn of what possible harm can be caused by one sinful word a word perhaps that can be derogatory to someone else's character it might be spoken in jest you say that you only spoke in fun who knows what damage your word spoken in jest prophetically has caused to someone else what damage to their good name and their reputation just one word and some actions that are so insignificant that you thought no one need ever have taken any notice of them but who knows but God what harm the cause to others who knows but God what harm the cause to yourself what about the sin you have heard so often about the sin the one sin of unbelief of unbelief you meant no harm to yourself or anyone else when you persisted in your sin of unbelief when you persisted in the neglect neglect that is not something in a sense it is not something positive a positive action on your path it is merely an omission more of an omission you neglect so great salvation it didn't mean any harm and are you going to answer God on the great judgment day what will

[ 35 : 04 ] God say when he shall punish thee are you going to say I intended no harm to come anyone's way by my sins can you say do you think that your punishment is unwaisted well I need only recall do you mind the emphasis that has to be made in the preaching of the gospel of God's grace that never before has God given such a clear revelation of the holiness of his being and attributes and of the justness of his justice in dealing with his creatures than he has in the message of the gospel when of the very essence of the gospel message this truth comes so forcefully to life that not one sin could have been admitted apart from the shedding of the blood of God's only begotten son how can anyone dare accuse

God of unrighteousness when they are punished for their sin and when they are guilty of having rejected God's only sacrifice for sin for to them there is left no more sacrifice for them some probably might plead that sin is finite are you going to enter upon an endless eternity of woe for something committed in one moment of time or even over a period of time the number of years a man has lived in this life is he going to suffer throughout endless ages well the answer that God surely already gives to that please verse that although sin is committed by fetish finest fetish within time sin is committed against an infinite being who is eternal in his being and unchangeably holy in his being and that is the measure of the heinousness of sin not the measure of a created being who commits it but the measure of the being against whom it is committed the infinite eternal and unchangeable heart or shall one say

I was no worse than others now this morning strangely enough I quoted this very text in a very different connection in a sense but it is a text that is very applicable to the particular plea that I have mentioned against God punishing of a man's sin that you have no worse than others Paul writing to the Corinthians tells them that we dare not make ourselves of the number or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves but they measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves among themselves are not wise already we are condemned for measuring ourselves in so far as

God's judgment is concerned measuring ourselves amongst ourselves comparing ourselves with others that is not the standard of God's judgment at all everyone has a law before God to fulfill everyone is confronted that is everyone who hears the gospel with the one savior everyone is commanded of God to believe in that one savior and everyone is accountable to God for his obedience or disobedience to God's holy law and gospel we are not to comfort ourselves thinking that we are no worse than others or to accuse

God unjustly for punishing us for that reason that we were no worse than others can you think of anyone anyone from our midst thinking or daring to say on the great day of judgment ah but I was not warned I was not warned had I been sufficiently warned I would not have appeared here in order to be finally sentenced to everlasting doom if only I had been warned you think back just briefly for a few moments over your own past history dare you tonight for one moment charge [ 42 : 01 ] God or men with having failed to warn you concerning the doom that awaits unrepentant sinners how many of your friends warned you can you even tell me how many ministers have warned you on how many sabbath days have you been warned how many times have you heard words of God quoted warning you regarding God's just judgment upon sin how many are in eternity now how many in glory from whom you have received warnings about the doom of those who continue in their sins do you think you can answer to

God by saying that you had peculiarly strong temptations to face in the world that you hadn't a chance because of the temptations that came your way is it not the case that temptations come the way of everyone and that temptations are tests of our character shall we submit and fall into temptation or shall we call upon God for grace to deliver us from falling in temptation do you think you can turn round on that day and say that others have been guilty of leading you astray perhaps of teaching you errors that so influenced your mind and heart that you could not be expected to know the narrow way that led to life can he not answer back had you not got my word from the time you came into the world had you not got my word to read for yourself did you not hear my word taught just as surely as you heard false teachings can you say do you think on that day ah but the Holy Spirit did not strive with me the Holy Spirit did not lead my thoughts away from evil ways the ways of the world into the ways of God when the fact of the matter is that from birth to death the Holy Spirit has driven with people wherever his word has been taught and they have resisted the Holy Ghost a spirit who ministers the things of Christ among a people he strives with sinners I am sure through the word through their consciences through every means of grace where the glory of Christ is revealed the Holy Spirit is striving with sinners and they are the ones who are guilty of resisting the

Holy Spirit are you going to say on that day that you could not change yourself that you could not repent that you could not believe in other words are you going to charge God himself with the guilt of your sinfulness and your want of penitence and faith and so we could go on with countless pleas that sinners might very well make when they have come face to face with God's righteous wrath against their sin do you think for instance you would make this plea if only

God had extended your opportunities for repentance how long do you think God is obliged to grant you time for repentance God who calls you every moment by one means or another to come to repentance and to faith how dare anyone say if only you had extended my time of opportunity to believe and to repent all these pleas are in vain on that day the day of God's just judgment upon sin there is no longer a throne of grace to which sinners are invited there is no further revelation of mercy there is no further preaching of a gospel no one of those who are still without

[ 48 : 25 ] Christ shall ever again hear glad tidings of salvation there is no longer for them any invitation by God the father to the fellowship of his son Jesus Christ depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels well surely now every one of us from the youngest to the eldest ought to pay heed and before we leave this house tonight to stop and consider how precious are the moments we have we have here just now how precious they are

because they constitute for us a time of opportunity opportunity to seek preparation for death and for judgment the only preparation that can avail a preparation that can protect us that can deliver us from the wrath to come because as surely as we are permitted times of peace in these days when as far as we are concerned as a community there are very few signs amongst us of the fiery wrath of

God against sin very few signs but as surely as we are enjoying now times of comparative peace and quiet unrest there is a day of wrath there is a day of wrath it is still to come there is wrath to come and it is to prepare against that day that you tonight are called of God to turn to himself to turn to himself the only one wherein there is refuge from wrath to come to Christ to close in with Christ not to come part of the way to Christ not even to determine or to vow that you shall be a better

passion in future than you have been hitherto not to come a long way towards Christ people have in a sense come a long way towards Christ in every generation I'm sure and they have perished because they did not come to Christ you must not stop short of Christ you must close in with Christ you must be bound up with Christ you must be united with Christ through faith in your heart you must allow nothing in all the creation of God passion or thing to come between you and Christ I am pleading with you just now from the depths of my being with all the energy at my command spiritually although

I might not appear to be very powerfully making an appeal to your heart I am not talking about physical power that is not the power that matters I am pleading with you in the name of Christ pleading that my plea to you might be accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit to be willing to come to Christ to close in with Christ and to receive him and rest on him alone for your salvation and if you do not I do not feel myself able to offer you any other hope I feel absolutely confident in warning you that outside Christ there is no hope of escaping the wrath to come why don't you close in with

Christ answer that question why don't you close in with Christ or what is it in you in your mind in your heart and spirit that prevents you tempted to address you by your name but I shall desist but I'm asking you you personally as an individual known to me and who knows me I am asking you what is it in you that stands between you and closing in with Christ now answer in God's presence answer God himself what is it in you that compels you to reject

[ 54 : 44 ] Christ and in closing I must say this to you you must not even share the blame the responsibility for for that sin of rejecting Christ with anyone else you must not share it with Satan the destroyer of souls you must not share it with God God it is who commands you to close in with Christ you are sinning against Christ you are sinning against God the Father you are sinning against the Holy Ghost if you refuse to close in with Christ and you are leaving yourself exposed to the righteous wrath of God against sin for time and for eternity again

I plead with you to close in with Christ may God bless this word to us let us pray O Lord do thou bless every one of us while we are in the place of blessing where thou dost deliver souls from cursing we pray that thou bless every one of us and the glory shall be thine forever Amen