

Opportunity gone forever

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Date: 01 January 2000

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- [0 : 0 0] Now shall we turn this morning to the chapter of God's Word, which we've read in Jeremiah chapter 8.
- Jeremiah chapter 8, reading verse 20. The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.
- Lord, at the beginning of a new year, it would be good for us if in all honesty we looked back over the past year.
- In this chapter of God's Word, God has got some very solemn things to say in his description of Israel.
- As I mentioned when I was reading the chapter, they had reached the place of a people where they were beyond shame for the kind of lives they were living.
- [1 : 5 2] They could do things in their daily living without a blush.
- That at one time in their experience, they would have been totally afraid to do.
- There is no doubt that they had reached the place where God was coming in terrible and in real judgment.
- He was going to take everything away from them. You know, Israel was a proud nation.
- Not even Pharaoh, not even the Egyptian whips, could take away the identity of Israel as a people.
- [3 : 0 4] And all Israel were brought up from childhood to remember that wonderful day when God said through Moses to Pharaoh, let my people go free.
- Generation after generation pictured it in their minds' eyes.
- Israel being led by Moses in order out of Egypt.
- On to freedom over the Red Sea through miracles and into the Promised Land.
- They could look back and see their forefathers on march to freedom. With God leading them.
- [4 : 0 6] A cloud by day and a burning light by night. They were a people who knew God.
- A people who were blessed by God. A people who were directed by God. A people who worshipped God. And right up until then, they would tell their children of that.
- Within a short time, this proud nation was to gather together again.
- And they were to be on the march again. But there was to be no pillar of cloud before them. And there was to be no flame of fire in the evening guarding over them.
- They were to be on the march. But there were to be no way of fire in the evening. They were to be on the march.
- [5 : 1 2] Being led out of the land that they had been given by God. And if you could picture the whole of Israel being led by Moses. Out of Egypt and slavery.

On to the promised land. With God before them. This same nation. Within a matter of months.

Were to be led out of the promised land. With a Babylonian pagan king before them.

And a Babylonian army alongside them. And proud Israel was yet to lose everything.

They couldn't believe it would happen to them. But it did. But why?

[6 : 13] Because of their spiritual condition. Their spiritual condition. And so we find in this chapter.

And in the first chapters of Jeremiah. And onwards. We find God. Showing to us.

What Israel had become like. And you find as I said in verse 12. As far as sin was concerned. And they had now reached a place where they didn't need to blush.

Where they could do what they wanted to do without worrying. Where they had shut God out of their lives. And they were determined to keep him out.

And they were told. I want to ask you the question my friends. As you look over the past year. And the past years. Is that what you are doing to God?

[7 : 16] Is that what you are doing to the Son of God? Is that what you are doing to the Son of God? Was there a time in your life where there were particular sins that you couldn't do? Particular things that you couldn't do?

Particular ways that you wouldn't go? But now it's different. You've no problem. You still come to church.

You still come to church. But there's nothing in you. When the word sin is mentioned from the pulpit.

You have a bitter feeling of resentment. When the judgment of God is proclaimed as almost on you. You have a feeling of antagonism.

Because God says. In the time of the visitation. They will be cast down.

[8 : 14] They will fall among them who fall. I will consume them. Says God. Now as we go into 1979.

Are we going to reach the place in 1979. Where we are going to be consumed by God. And everything taken away from us.

Or not. Therefore it would be good to look into 1978. And see what we have done. With the truth of God.

And 77 and 76. And we ask ourselves. Have we not reached the place where we have stopped blushing? Well it may be written over some.

As it was written over Israel. These terrible words. The harvest is past.

[9 : 12] The summer has ended. And we are not saved. We are not saved.

We are not saved. Our time of opportunity. Is gone. Now I want to look with you. At the children of Israel.

This morning. And I want you to look at them. As a people like ourselves. Because we are very like them.

We have got a gospel ministry. We know the scriptures. We have been weaned on the truth of God. Since we were young.

We were not ignorant. Let's look at ourselves. As we look at Israel. You see the truth about Israel.

[10 : 11] First of all. Was that she had multiplied iniquity. She had multiplied iniquity. It wasn't one sin. Godlessness now.

Was the pattern of our living. The general pattern. Godlessness. Could be written over a whole.

Godlessness. But not only was. She multiplied in our iniquity. But she was smug. In our iniquity. She was smug in our sin.

It didn't bother her very much. And the truth of the matter was. That Israel had come to the end of our road.

Her problem. Was not ignorance. But rebellion. And maybe my friends.

[11 : 13] Our problem is not ignorance. But rebellion. She didn't know it. But that. At that moment.

There was an army. Of pagan Babylon. On the march. Chosen by God. To destroy her.

In the very near future. And you know my friend. We don't know what God.

Has ordained at this moment. To reach us. To take away everything that we've got. To take away ourselves.

To take away maybe those we love deepest. You see. You can't make a fool of God. And get away with it. No. We come to our text.

[12 : 17] The harvest is past. The summer has ended. And yet we're not saved. You see it seems. From these words.

That there was a time. When something could have been done. There's a time. When something should have been done.

And there was a time. When something wasn't done. There was a summer. There was a harvest.

There was a moment of opportunity. There was a time. When something could have been done. There's a time. When something should have been done. When something wasn't done.

When something wasn't done. When something wasn't done. When something wasn't done. I wonder if that's the way with us. There was a time. When God was speaking to us. There was a time.

[13 : 14] When God was striving with us. There was a time. When we know in our hearts. That God was dealing with us. Calling us. Warning us.

But we fought against it. And now the harvest is past. Certainly the harvest of last year is past.

The summer of opportunity of last year is gone. And we are not saved. Are we at the place.

Are we at the place. Between. The lost opportunities. And the coming judgment of God. Are we at that place.

The place. Where God. Through Jeremiah. Is stretching out. To reach us. You see. The strange thing about Israel. Is that although Israel had departed from. The laws of God. And the precepts of God.

[14 : 12] And the precepts of God. And the ways of God. And the precepts of God. And the ways of God. Although Israel could blush. Or not blush. When she sinned. Although Israel.

In one part of the earth. Couldn't care. A thing. For the things of God. Is that the place of God. Is that the power of man. Now. To be faithful to God. Or. Today. Nasd nothing.

Teme. Through kings. Or not blush when she sinned. Although Israel in one part of her couldn't care a thing for the things of God and lived without God.

Yet at the same time, Israel had superstitious hopes in God. And they would say, the temple, the temple.

You know, that's what the prophet is saying here. Don't say the temple, the temple. Don't say that we know about God.

[15 : 18] Don't say that we know all about the cross. Don't say that we once had an experience of Christ. Don't say that. That's saying the temple, the temple. Don't say that our fathers and our mothers brought us up the right way.

That is a superstitious concept of God. When a person can sin the sins that their parents were afraid of.

When a people can turn away from the God of their fathers and blush without sin to say the temple, the temple, and the truth, and the gospel, and the cross is sheer blasphemy.

Do you like that? Am I? Don't say that. Don't say that. Don't say that. Don't say that. Don't say that. Don't say that. But prepare.

Because Israel had a superstitious hope in God. When she had ties with Egypt, she thought she would get help from somewhere else apart from God.

[16 : 28] You know I've met many people in my ministry who think that they're going to be saved because of their mother's and their father's prayers. They do. They think that they're going to be saved because their parents have prayed for them. I've met multitudes like that.

My friend, you won't be saved by any prayer. You can only be saved by the Savior. And you can only be saved by the Savior if you go direct to him yourself and ask him to save you.

And after you know that you are saved by him, you can only be sure that you're his by loving him and following him all the way. No use being superstitious in saying we know the truth. We know what it is to be saved. We know about the cross.

You see, the problem about Israel was she thought it couldn't happen to her. She never thought she would be taken into slavery. The leaders of Uri Jeremiah wouldn't believe it.

The Pharisees and the priests and the scribes said it couldn't happen. The ordinary people wouldn't accept it. They wouldn't accept it until they heard the snoring of the horse's noses when the army of conquest arrived at the doors.

[17 : 55] And there will be some here in this church. And you look over 1978 and you've had plenty of opportunity and all the years before that. And you will not believe that the messenger of God's judgment is even now in the march to take everything away from you.

And you won't believe that your soul will be lost in God's hell forever. You won't believe it until God comes. Now my friends, that's the way Israel was. And so to us the warning comes. To us the sentence arrives. The harvest has passed. The summer has ended. And yet we're not saved.

You know, these are very solemn words. Not saved. The most solemn words in the scripture. They're final words. Not saved. They're tragic words.

Not saved. They're not saved. They're fearful words. Fearful words. They're frightening words. They're judgmental words. They come through the prophet from the mouth of God.

Not saved. The harvest has passed. The harvest has passed. The summer has ended. And we are not saved. But you know, my friends, this is a tragedy that could have been averted. And this is a destiny that could have been different.

[20 : 01] I want you to look with me just for a few moments this morning at the people of Israel. And I want to pick out for you, quite simply, from the previous chapters, certain things about this people that's very like our own nation.

And very like maybe the experience of some of us here in church. If you look at Israel's illness, we'll call it, her spiritual illness, you'll find that the first symptom of it was that she forsook a God that she knew about.

In Jeremiah 1 and 16, you read these words. I will utter my judgment against them, touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods.

And then in 2 and 13, you have these words. I will read them to you. For my people have committed two evils.

One, they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water. And two, they have shewed out for themselves cisterns that can hold no water.

[21 : 47] I want you to notice that very simply at the beginning. The first symptom of their sickness, their spiritual malaise, was that they forsook a God that they knew.

You see, we cannot evade this in our own lives. We have a God who has revealed himself in the scriptures and we know about him.

We have a God who demands from us worship. Worship. Worship.

Worship. And we have a God who expects total obedience from us. Now there's nothing difficult in understanding that.

We have a God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ in human form. We have a God who shows us the nature of sin and our sin and his hatred of it in that he came himself in a human form and died on a cross of shame.

[23 : 13] So that all who will be with him for eternity will be perfect and their sins will be punished on the body of God.

Now, when we come to the place where we know about God and we know about his attitude to our sins and we know about his coming on the purpose of salvation, when we know about his salvation, when we know about his salvation, when we know about his salvation, when we know about the testimony of our conscience and the testimony of his word that our God made us, when we deliberately then put that knowledge aside and do not act upon it and do not live our lives according to it in trust and faith and love and obedience, when we know about his salvation, we then are guilty of forsaking God.

And this forsaking of God always comes in degrees. We forsake a little at a time and then another little and another little and another little until we have reached a place of open rebellion.

And so the first symptom in the tragedy of Israel is the first symptom we can find in our own heart is that we forsake God.

You are here this morning and you have forsaken God. That's the first symptom of Israel as a nation.

[25 : 02] But the second symptom is found in chapter 2 at verse 8. And it's a tragedy and we find it in our day.

The second thing about Israel was that she wasn't without our churches and she wasn't without a form of worship. She wasn't without a lip service to God.

She had at the very heart of our nation a corrupted church. In 2 and 8 you read these words.

The priests said not, Where is the Lord? They didn't say that. And they that handled the law, God's laws, they knew me not.

The pastors also transgressed against me, those who were supposed to lead the people. And the prophets prophesied by Baal and they walked after things that don't profit.

[26 : 14] They were supposed to be a corrupt church. A corrupted church. A church in a land that had a message contrary to the message of God.

Contrary to the revealed word. And the people wanted to believe the church with the soiled message.

Now in our land, in 1979, we too have a corrupted church. We have in our nation a church.

Not all, but we have in large proportion, men in our pulpit, pastors, keeper of the things of God.

We have lost the message of the word of God. We have a church that will not preach the doctrines of the word of God in our land.

[27 : 27] The need of conversion. The need of being saved. The cleansing of our sin and the blood of the cross.

A heaven to be gained and a hell to be shunned. We have not got a church that calls the nation to holiness and to biblical worship.

And so we have a corrupted church. We are the people that have forsaken God. And a corrupted church.

Just like Israel. In 5 and verse 3. We find the next symptom of their evil. Let me read it to you.

Chapter 5 verse 3. They have refused to be corrected.

[28 : 32] You have stricken them and they have not grieved. They have made their faces harder than a rock. They have refused to return.

Now I am going to speak to you as a pastor. Three things. Three things. Three things in this unwillingness to change. One. They refused to receive correction.

Two. They have made their faces harder than a rock. Three. They have refused to return. Now I am going to speak to you as a pastor. And I look down upon you from the pulpit.

When I am preaching. And when I speak certain things from God's word.

I can sense in some people terrible restlessness. It goes beyond it. It goes to the second stage then.

[29 : 43] I see people literally setting their face like a flint. In that when the truth reaches them. The lips tighten. The eyes stare.

The face goes up to the roof. And almost ears get shut. And I find that in professing Christian people. As well as in converted people.

From this pulpit. I find it in the most unexpected of people. Faces.

Like a flint. Harder than a rock. So that the face. Reflects.

What's inside. And then. They refuse to return. They reject the message.

[30 : 45] You know my friend. You might think that I am being very hard this morning. I am not. I am only saying what God's word says.

This was the problem with Israel. And you see in Israel. There were various types of people. They were the openly.

Sinful. In the sense that they. Wouldn't even think I am going to church. And then there was the respectable. And then there was another type.

And another type. And we are all here. In every congregation. Every type. But this is true. They refuse to receive correction. Human pride. And personal sin. Is the cement.

Of Satan. And so that. All the spiritual works. Inside a person. Is the cement. Of Satan. And so that. All the spiritual works. Inside a person. Because of human pride.

[31 : 41] And. And. Willingness to return. To. To. To. To. To. To. To. To.

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[32 : 34] To. To. To. to return, refusing to repent, refusing to say to God you're sorry and not only that you're sorry but that from this day onward your life is going to be changed, it's going to be handed over to God, you're going to trust in the Saviour and your whole life and everything is in it is handed over to God. My friends if you're not like that this morning, you're not a Christian. If you're unwilling to hand your life over to God to be saved, you're not a Christian. And so you have the third symptom. First, forsaking God and the knowledge that you've got of them to a corrupted church which makes religion easy. Then an unwillingness to change. I've got too much material here this morning. I'm going to stop there this morning. I'll continue in the evening. If you look at these three things, the rest will come to. Forsaking God, unwilling to change, not unwillingness to change, refusal to receive the resurrection that you are wrong, then positively setting your face as a flint. Hard, cold, stubborn, evil. I read a story this week. It contrasted so much from this kind of faith that can develop when we turn away from God. It was a story of a young girl in her late twenties or something like that. Henry Drummond tells it. And everybody looked at this girl. Not that she was born beautiful, but there was a beauty about her face. It wasn't adorned, but there was a quiet niceness. And she didn't wear much jewelry, I'm told, but she did have a locket that she often wore around her neck. A little gold locket. I think it was heart-shaped.

You know, one of those that open, and you'll see the picture maybe of your father or your mother or your sweetheart or something like that. And they used to say to her, let's see who's inside the locket. And she would never open the locket. She wouldn't let anyone look inside it. And they often wondered, had she got a secret boy that she wasn't wanting anyone to know about?

She was in the locket. And everybody commented upon this girl. She had a quality of looks and a quality of character that was above and beyond all. She did very, very ill. And someone, one visitor said, oh, I would walk and wonder what you have in the locket, dear.

Well, she says, well, she says, you can go and look. The person opened the locket. And there, written in her own handwriting, was a verse of scripture.

The person, who, having not seen, who, having not seen, I love. And you know, my friends, that was the motivating power and the beauty-creating power and the communicating power in her very existence.

[36 : 57] Whom, having not seen, whom, having not seen, I love. What a difference between the hardened face and the soft face.

What a difference between the God-directed life and the self-directed life. What a difference in the harvest and the ultimate.

What Israel didn't know was all that she had was going to be taken away from her.

What that girl knew was that despite all that she had, there was infinitely more going to be given to her.

What that evolution, slay and the more she had, there was or comfort from superstitious religion, however genuine your feelings might be, while your lives are lives that have forsaken God so that you refuse to blush where once you blushed, where you refused to receive correction, where you set your faces aflint, when you refused to return. How tragic if this would be the year of God's visitation to you as he visited

[39 : 18] Israel. And days gone by. I say to you at the beginning of the year, I say to you right now from the word of God, Christ is willing to save you. Are you going to begin the year in dependence upon him, trusting in him, following his word, in obedience to him, all the way according to the utmost of your knowledge? Or are you going to continue on the road? If you're a professing Christian that's taking you farther away from God, or if you're an unbeliever, a road that leads to death, I wouldn't want anyone to take that road, to have written over their life. The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and yet we are not saved. May God help you to come to the your Savior, and ask him to save you, and begin this year with him.

O bless thy word to us, we pray thee, this morning, our God. May thy Holy Spirit direct us, and keep us in the way. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

Amen.