

THE TEARS OF AUTUMN

Text: Jeremiah 8:20-9:1

I love the seasons of the year and so does God; He made them. Genesis 1:14: "And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years." Genesis 8:22: "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."

The prophet Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, experienced much that brought ache to his heart and tears to his eyes. He prophesied in Judah before and during the seventy years exile. Jeremiah stayed behind with "...the poorest sort of the people of the land" (II Kings 25:14c) until he followed the remaining remnant who fled to Egypt (II Kings 25:26) where he eventually died.

When Jeremiah speaks of the heartbreak of the summer ending and harvest passing, he is making spiritual application, much like our Lord did when He said in John 4:35, "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest."

To better understand our story, we must go to Jeremiah 7:12, "But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel." Shiloh was the original place where the Tabernacle and Ark of the Covenant was placed. In I Samuel 4 the rebellious sons of Eli took the Ark of the Covenant with them in battle. They were killed and the Ark was stolen by the Philistines and never returned to Shiloh. In Jeremiah 7:23-26 the prophet gives the solemn warning to repent or else a similar thing will happen to Judah. Proverbs 29:1: "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

In Jeremiah 8:1, 2 we see that the bones of the deceased leaders of Judah are dug up, exposed and treated like dung. The people of Judah are setting the bones before the false deities of nature (sun, moon, and host of heaven), which they are now worshipping. Judah is not only distancing herself from her roots, she is declaring blame on these true worshippers of Jehovah for her demise (Ezekiel 18:2). Then we observe in Jeremiah 8:3a, "And death shall be chosen rather than life by the residue (remnant) that remain of this evil family...." Judah, much like the culture of death that we now live in, are making the wrong choices. Oh! That we might take heed to God's Word in Deuteronomy 30:19, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." In Jeremiah 8:5-7, 12

we see that the people of God refuse to return and have lost their sense of shame. Jeremiah spoke to this issue in Jeremiah 3:3, "Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed." Jeremiah 8:10 now shows us that the family begins to fall apart as the sacred covenant of marriage is thrown to the wind. If the people cheat on God, what keeps them or better said, "Who" keeps them from cheating on each other? In Jeremiah 8:11-15 we see Judah performing the age-old habit of treating their symptoms, but not addressing the root problem. They are saying all we need is peace and that will solve our situation. Yet God declares there is no peace to those who reject righteousness as He confirms in Isaiah 48:22, "There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked." Ezekiel clearly sees the same problem repeating itself with Israel several years later in Ezekiel 13:1-3, 16-17. Finally, in Jeremiah 8:17-19, we see Judah weeping because of the captivity directly caused by her rebellion and she seems to say with angst, isn't the Lord still in Zion; don't we still have the lineage of our kings, as if to say, cannot we still recover?

Let's examine our hearts as we, too, make application.

I. TEARS FOR RESTORATION

Ezra 4:10-13. The natural response when an edifice is built for God's glory, like those who saw the restoration of the Temple, is to rejoice. But the rejoicing was done by the young men who never saw Solomon's Temple. The old men who remembered, wept as they saw people having to settle for something far less. Let us pray, remembering the promise of Joel 2:25, "And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you."

II. TEARS FOR REVIVAL

Psalm 85:6 says, "Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?" Joel 2:13: "And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil."

Revival prayer is:

A. A prayer for mercy. Psalm 51:1: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions."

B. A prayer that brings total cleansing. Psalm 51:2: "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."

C. A prayer that involves thorough repentance. Psalm 51:3: “For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.” Psalm 51:6: “Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.”

D. A prayer that births overwhelming joy. Psalm 51:8: “Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.” Psalm 51:12: “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.”

E. A prayer that allows God to rebuild our brokenness and restore us a place for service. Psalm 51:10: “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” Psalm 51:13: “Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.”

F. A prayer that removes guilt. Psalm 51:14: “Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.”

III. TEARS FOR REMEDY

I love the rhetorical question of Jeremiah 8:22, “Is there no Balm in Gilead; is there no Physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?” Jeremiah 8:17 tells us that God is sending serpents and vipers among the disobedient people. It is a word picture that brings us back to Numbers 21:5-9 when God sent poisonous serpents among the disobedient. And the remedy was that Moses would make a serpent of brass, place it upon a pole and whoever would look upon it would live. This is the promise of God. Isaiah 45:22, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” This is the very occasion of which Jesus spoke as He illustrated what it means to be saved in John 3.

As we hear the cries and visualize the tears of Jeremiah, we do understand that, yes! there is a Balm in Gilead; there is a Great Physician here! Mark 2:17 says, “When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” There was a woman with an issue of blood for twelve years and Mark 5:26 informs us, “And (she) had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse.” America, the Church and the family must now go to the Great Physician! Our prescriptions, antidotes and operations will not avail. Let us look to Jesus as we have never looked before! Let us look unto Him, until He, in mercy, looks down upon us (Lamentations 4:48-50).

