

Jeremiah Chapter 9 v 11 - 16 & v 22 - 26

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[0 : 00] It says this, I will make Jerusalem, this is the Lord speaking, I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a haunt of jackals, and I, the Lord, will lay waste the towns of Judah so that no one can live there.

Who is wise enough to understand this? Who has been instructed by the Lord and can explain it? Why has the land been ruined and laid waste like a desert that no one can cross?

The Lord said, it is because they've forsaken my law, which I set before them. They've not obeyed me or followed my law.

Instead, they've followed the stubbornness of their hearts. They've followed the Baals as their ancestors taught them. Therefore, this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says.

See, I will make this people eat bitter food and drink poisoned water. I will scatter them among the nations that neither they nor their ancestors have known, and I will pursue them with the sword until I made an end of them.

[1 : 28] And then taking up the reading a little bit later on, verse 23. This is what the Lord says. Let not the wise boast of their wisdom, or the strong boast of their strength, or the rich boast of their riches.

But let the one who boasts boast about this, that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord who exercises kindness, justice, and righteousness on earth.

For in these I delight, declares the Lord. The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will punish all who are circumcised only in the flesh, Egypt, Judah, Edom, Ammon, Moab, and all who live in the wilderness in distant places.

For all these nations are really uncircumcised, and even the whole house of Israel is uncircumcised in heart. And stung like a bee.

Do you remember Cassius Clay, Muhammad Ali, that amazingly powerful boxer, very agile on his feet, and also somewhat of a poet, that he was able to describe himself in that sort of way.

[3 : 01] Now, did he continue to excel in boxing? What happened to his strength of body and his strength of mind?

Some of you might remember him appearing on TV just before he died. His wisdom, his strength, is no more.

In Jeremiah 9, verse 23, we read that the Lord said this, Let not the wise boast of their wisdom, or the strong boast of their strength, or the rich man boast of their riches.

This is the Lord instructing Jeremiah, a prophet in the city of Jerusalem, that religious city of Jerusalem, hundreds of years before Christ was born in Bethlehem.

What had Jeremiah got to do? Basically, don't let those who boast in their wisdom, their strength, their riches, continue to boast.

- [4 : 19] Rebuke them. Jeremiah, don't let these people place their confidence in the things that they boast in. Their cleverness.
- Their powers. Their peculiar gifts. Notice the repetition of that word, their. These people thought that all these talents originated with themselves.
- It was the wisdom that they had gathered, the strength that they had developed, and the riches that they, or their families, had accumulated.
- These things marked them off as being special in their eyes. And they looked down on the generality of mankind. Now, our reading made it clear that God was about to judge the people of Jerusalem.
- Real or imaginary wisdom, strength, and riches would not save them from the disaster that was about to overtake them. And there's a very simple application to this.
- [5 : 34] If you think of yourself as being better than others because of the things that you boast in, maybe even to yourself, remember that the Lord sees your pride.
- And this passage is a rebuke to you. Your confidence is misplaced. You need something very much greater than those things that you boast in.
- So is it wrong then to have wisdom, to have strength, or to have riches?
- Of course not. You'll readily agree that we need wisdom to make good decisions. Young people need wisdom to choose the right husband or wife.
- parents need wisdom to bring up children in this world, this evil world. We need wisdom in business affairs.
- [6 : 38] People who have special responsibilities to govern countries, organisations, or churches need wisdom. We all, every one of us, need wisdom in our relationships with each other.
- We make a mess of things because we lack wisdom. Where do you search for wisdom? We all need the wisdom of God, our righteous maker, to know what is right.
- Do you look for right wisdom from the righteous God? Whole books of God's word are devoted to teaching us wisdom.
- Proverbs, for example. Look, think about Proverbs 4, verse 5. Get wisdom. Get understanding. Do not forget my words or turn away from them.
- Do not forsake wisdom. You might learn wisdom as a child, but don't forsake wisdom and she will protect you. Love her and she will watch over you.
- [7 : 53] How does the Lord keep people in his hand? Do not forsake wisdom. She will protect you. Love her and she will watch over you.
- If your wisdom fails to help you in your life, your wisdom is falling short of the wisdom that you need.
- and Jeremiah was called to warn those who had the wrong wisdom. It was their wisdom that they boasted in. It wasn't God's wisdom.
- Remember, there was, there's a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death. Jeremiah's hearers had the wrong wisdom.
- They were heading for judgment and for death. The nation of Babylon was going to crush Jerusalem and the people were going to be killed or perhaps taken away into exile.
- [8 : 52] The intellectuals of Jerusalem foolishly boasted in their wisdom, their knowledge, their understanding, just like so many people today.
- Do you know anyone who gives the impression that they know everything? They insist on having the last word.

People are uncomfortable in their presence because of their display of their wisdom. But they don't have friends. What sort of wisdom is that? Their wisdom lets them down in the matter of relationships.

Some people mistakenly confuse knowledge with wisdom. Many people assume that the knowledgeable people in the earth such as academics, TV presenters, managers and journalists are wise people.

But they might not be. They might well make a dreadful mess of their lives through wrong relationships. Too much alcohol or illicit drugs.

[9 : 58] Politicians and others may mock at the Bible that teaches the self-control that they lack. They boast of their freedom to live in their way.

Now the movers and shakers of ancient Jerusalem thought they knew better than God as they justified their lifestyle and boasted in their supposed freedom to live life the way that they wanted independent of the Lord.

And judgment was coming on all the people of Jerusalem. The wisdom of the worldly wise and those who trusted them was going to let them down.

their proud confidence was going to be punctured. So what about each one of us?

What about each one of you? Are you like those people of Jerusalem who boasted in their wisdom? Are you convinced that you know better than God? You're intent on going your way.

[10 : 59] Yes you know what God says but you turn a blind eye to that a deaf ear to that and you go your way. But where is your wisdom leading you?

Does it give you the answers that you need in your relationships with others? Does it give you the answers to the really big questions of life?

Who are you? Why were you made? Where are you going? What will happen to you when you die? How will you face God? Now those are the big issues.

Does your wisdom help you in those things? Those crucial things. Those things which are by far the most important and the many trivial things we think we know all about.

So is it wrong to have riches? Should we all be poor? Some people would say that. Is it good for nations to be poor? So poor that there's insufficient food to go around.

[12 : 06] So poor that the health services and the educational services cannot be maintained. Earlier this year we had news from our friends in the north of Cyprus that the value of the local currency had dropped against the pound and this made it very difficult for people to pay their mortgages and school fees all of which were paid in pounds.

Students in the local university were particularly badly hit and then they faced the very real temptation to engage in crime.

Poverty extreme poverty is not good. The wise man in Proverbs 30 verse 8 said this give me prayer to the Lord give me neither poverty nor riches but give me only my daily bread otherwise I might have too much and disown you and say who is the Lord or I may become poor and steal and so dishonor the name of my God.

God. In his first letter to Timothy Paul made it clear that it's the love of money that's the root of all kinds of evil.

If your life is all about gathering more and more money you'll never have enough. Worse still your absorption with gaining money will cause sadness to others.

[13 : 47] Some months ago I was talking to a care worker in the south of England. She lived in quite an ordinary sort of town but very close by.

There was a very prosperous town where people who gained fortunes in the city of London lived and she said we're really concerned about so many of those children in that town.

Their parents neglect them as they gained lots and lots of money. The children are deprived of love of time and affection and those poor children suffered because their parents were so desirous of gaining more and more wealth.

And you too will suffer if money is the God that you trust in and think about daily and you boast about. You will suffer spiritually. Paul went on to say some eager for money have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Do you remember the rich young man who came to Jesus, the rich young ruler, who came to Jesus and said to Jesus, asked him, what good thing he must do to inherit eternal life? He went away sad.

[15 : 15] Why was that? Because he lived for money and the things it could buy. Now you might have lots of money in the bank or invested in property but your wealth cannot buy love or contentment or eternal security.

it doesn't even guarantee security in this life. Have you ever tried to get really close to a beautiful bird or butterfly in order to take a fantastic photograph of it?

Just as you thought you had it there, it flew off, it had gone. A wise man once wrote, do not wear yourself out to get rich, do not trust in your own cleverness, cast but a glance at riches and they're gone.

They'll surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle. It's not good to boast in your wisdom.

It's equally foolish to boast in riches that you can be so easily parted from. None of us can keep what we own forever.

[16 : 34] forever. Is it good to have power and strength? Well, ask a gardener who's got to cultivate a patch of land that's gone wild.

Ask a person who finds it hard to keep up with friends on a long walk. Ask a person who has to work long hours to satisfy their employer.

Ask someone who's got to look after an active child or children for hours on end. Of course it's good to have strength. Power's good. Strength is good. Like money, however, it fades.

Some people lose their health and their strength rapidly. Some strong people eventually succumb to disease and aging. Young men often go to great lengths to build up their strength, their muscles, so that everyone admires them, and their fitness for sports and athletics, but then they've got to work equally hard to maintain their strength.

And then later in life, work very hard and think very hard how to simply maintain functionality. I wonder if you've had this experience.

[17 : 52] You've not seen a close friend perhaps for some decades, and then you see them again, and you think, wow, they've aged, haven't they? But you know, they look at you and say exactly the same thing.

A powerful businessman may achieve the top position in his company. What happens then? It's the same for all. If you're tempted to boast of your strength of body or mind, it won't last.

A time will come when you are over the hill, if you're not ready over that hill. It's good to be strong, but is the strength you have been used for the Lord?

Or for anyone else for that matter? Is your strength and your wisdom something that you use to impress others? If you consider that you're particularly gifted with riches, strength, wisdom, or anything else, remember that you must give an account for those things that you've been given, those very things that you think set you above everyone else.

Remember the sobering words of the Lord Jesus Christ, Luke chapter 12 verse 48, from everyone who's been given much, much will be demanded.

[19 : 26] And from the one who's been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. It's folly to boast in something that lies idle.

If you're incredibly intelligent and well educated, or as strong as an ox, or as wealthy as an emperor, that doesn't make you a great Christian.

Christian. Jesus makes it clear that the greatest in the kingdom is the servant of all. Think how he himself powerfully and uniquely demonstrated this.

Think how he laid aside his riches and became poor for us. He was prepared to look foolish and weak for us as he suffered there on the cross.

His infinite strength, riches, and wisdom were hidden from those who crucified him. And if you boast in your strength, your riches, your wisdom, reflect on what he laid aside in order to save you from the judgment of God.

[20 : 45] Remember that the Son of God came into this world to bear your guilt, your shame, for your many, many sins, not least your boastfulness in your wisdom, your strength, your riches.

So, what do you or who do you boast in? It might not be your wisdom, strength, or riches. It might be something else that you think makes you a cut above everyone else.

What makes you feel important? What makes you, you? Is it who you know? Is it your sporting talent, your practical skill, your social or religious connections?

Is it your experiences in life? Is it your religious experiences? Is it your popularity? Is it the family you were born into? Christian? At the outset of the service, I asked you, are you a good boaster?

Well, are you a good boaster? Is it such a thing as good boasting? you're probably you're aware of the many things that the apostle Paul could have boasted in?

[22 : 06] His nationality, his family, his righteousness, his religious seal. But listen to what he says in Galatians chapter 6 verse 15. Paul said this, may I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ through whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

Now Paul was well acquainted with Jeremiah chapter 9 and he quoted from these verses in his two letters to the Corinthian church whose members were inclined to boast in their wisdom, their spiritual gifts, their rights, their freedoms, their religious teachers.

So pay particular attention to what else the Lord had to say through Jeremiah. Look at verse 24.

Let the one who boasts boast about this, that they have the understanding to know me that I am the Lord who exercises kindness, justice, righteousness, and righteousness, for in these things I delight.

The very first thing that they had to know and understand and take in, grasp, and live in the light of was this, that he is the Lord. In verse 17 he describes himself as the Lord Almighty.

[23 : 41] The proud people of Jerusalem boasted in their power, their riches, and their wisdom, and they are about to be crushed by the might of the Babylonian empire. But what was that compared to the might of the Almighty, who raises up kingdoms and brings them back down again?

The king of Babylon himself was later to learn by bitter experience, described by the prophet Daniel, that the Most High is sovereign over all the kingdoms of the earth, and gives them to anyone he wishes.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion. His kingdom endures from generation to generation. In your boasting about your endowments, have you acknowledged the power and the wisdom of the Most High God, who gives you life and breath and everything you have?

When you attempted to be anxious and afraid, have you understood the implication of the fact that he is Lord? If you think that events are chaotic in your life, have you grasped the truth that Jesus is Lord?

He's been made head of all things for the church. Have you grasped that? And then secondly, you need to be reminded that the Lord exercises justice or judgment on earth.

[25 : 14] He exercises present tense. He does this now in time. The proud people of Jerusalem needed to remember this. They forgot their history and the history of their enemies.

They forgot that the Lord judged Pharaoh of Egypt when he and his country suffered plague after plague in this life. They forgot how Pharaoh and his armies perished in the Red Sea.

And the Lord continued to exercise judgment on earth. Judgment was about to fall on them there in Jerusalem at the hand of the Babylonians.

And he continues to exercise justice on earth. Do you remember the proud king Herod? The fate of Herod is a warning to us. It's a lesson to us. Herod had brought the people of Tyre and Sidon to submit to him.

And we read this. On the appointed day Herod was wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. They all shouted, this is the voice of a god, not a man.

[26 : 25] And immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down and he was eaten by worms and died. Are you like Herod in the sense that you feed on the praises of others?

In your little kingdom you think you are a king, but you need to remember that the Lord exercises justice and judgment on earth.

He doesn't and cannot change. You're not above or beyond his justice, now, never mind eternally. And then thirdly, they fail to understand that the Lord exercises loving kindness on earth.

Remember when the Lord of glory came down to earth to dwell? He healed the sick, he fed the poor, he gave eyesight to the blind. The authorities in Judea failed to recognize this.

They hid their head in the sand. They lived in blind unbelief. Read this, that Jesus came to his own and his own rejected him.

[27 : 36] Light shone in darkness, but men loved darkness rather than light. So, what is your response to the Lord who exercised loving kindness on earth then?

Have you understood? thousands of people saw the loving kindness of the Lord being exercised on the earth then? Well, what's your response to that?

Perhaps you explained it away as something that happened a long time ago. That's what people do, isn't it? And you say that these things don't happen today. Well, of course, in one sense you're right.

They don't. Jesus came only once. He only is the Lord who came to earth and delighted in exercising such powerful loving kindness on earth.

And note this, He delighted in it. He delighted in showing patience, mercy, and love. He's the same yesterday, today, and forever. Have you recognized His matchless character?

[28 : 46] Has His outstanding, unique, loving kindness, patience, graciousness, and gentleness convinced you that you can and you must trust Him and own Him as your Lord and your Master now, today?

Today, we're told, is the day of salvation. Have you come to the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you trusting in Him now, today? And He did show kindness to the sick, the lame, the blind, when He was here on earth.

But He calls you to look to Him now, to heal your spiritual sickness, your lameness, your spiritual lameness. You're slow to please the Lord, you're spiritually lame.

If you don't see the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, you're spiritually blind. And on one occasion the Lord said this, I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so that you can become rich, and white clothes to wear so that you can cover your nakedness, and salve to put on your eyes so that you can see.

Can you say, I've seen the light? Have you had that experience in your life? Thankfully, many of you have. But do you continue to live in the light?

[30 : 13] notice fourthly, here's the Lord who exercises righteousness on earth. His judgment on Jerusalem in the time of Jeremiah was right.

They deserved it. They went for centuries of disobedience. A truly wise person, Jerusalem, would have acknowledged that the threat against Jerusalem was not only real, but it was right and proper.

The people of Jerusalem had rebelled against him for years, and the Lord in his great patience had given them time to repent. And they were slow to recognize the loving kindness of the Lord towards them over those centuries.

centuries. And now they failed to recognize that the Lord was right in bringing judgment upon the city and its inhabitants.

Centuries later, the Lord was right in striking down Herod with a bolt from the blue. This proud king basted in and encouraged others to glory in him rather than the Lord.

[31 : 30] Herod didn't worship the Lord, he worshipped Herod. Herod was not righteous, he failed to see his unrighteousness.

But he wasn't alone. Paul, in quoting the Old Testament scriptures, wrote to the Christians at Rome, there is none righteous, no, not one.

I wonder if you follow that logic. If there's no righteous person apart from the Lord, you can't be righteous. If the Lord is righteous and he alone is righteous, you must come to him and let him share his righteousness with you.

He's the only one who can stand up for you in heaven. If you're to be saved from the wrath to come, you need one to stand up for you when you fail, come short, miserably short.

You very often are very saddened as you look at your own life and very ashamed. But what about the Lord who sees all through your heart, all through your motives?

[32 : 52] You need the righteous one to stand up for you. you need that advocate with the Father to plead for you when you fall short, when you sin, when you bring disgrace upon you, yourself, your family, the church and whoever else.

God love you. You need that to stand up for you. You need that to stand up for the Lord. The Lord alone has eternal riches and wisdom and power. So isn't it sensible and wise to call out upon him, to trust him, to commit your way to him and continue so to do?

The Lord Jesus Christ is the only one who could or would have died in the place of guilty sinners and was vindicated by being raised from the dead.

Jesus, meaning Saviour, is the only one through whom you must be saved.

Are you trusting in him now today? Is he your Lord? Is he your Saviour? Is he your King?
Is he your friend? Do turn to him today if you haven't done so already.

[34 : 11] Let's pray.