*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

June 10 - 15

*The Prophet Jeremiah*

**Monday, June 10 Jeremiah 9:1-11**

*“I will weep”*

Jeremiah’s words poignantly demonstrate that he is not aloof or indifferent to the suffering of the people. Further, the sorrow Jeremiah feels at the fate of his people is felt by God as well. He is not only the God of righteous judgment, but the God of sorrow who “weeps” and “wails” (verse 10) for the destruction to come.

However deeply Jeremiah may have entered into the impending agony of Judah’s suffering, he did not attempt to hide the people’s great wickedness. This was so deep that escape to a wilderness refuge seemed preferable to being present at the degradation of Jerusalem. The simplest accommodation in an uninhabited area would enable the prophet to be free from the sights which thrust themselves upon him day by day in Jerusalem, where men were all adulterers (in their worship of foreign gods) and engaged in treacherous lies in order to fool and defraud each other. The people were so deep in their sins that they were incapable of repentance, refusing to even acknowledge God.

*There is no healing for sin, Lord, where there is no recognition of You. Amen.*

**Tuesday, June 11 Jeremiah 9:12-26**

*“Call for the mourners”*

Judgment has fallen on Judah for her sins. Following the Baals is a blatant example of the people’s folly. Mourning cries mark the demise of shameful Judah. Exile is upon them. Death too has arrived and is personified as climbing into homes and roaming the doomed cities of Judah. While the precise time for the fulfillment of these prophecies is not given, it is the wise person who hears the word of God and understands his anger with sin.

There is a valid form of boasting which comes with the realization of correct priorities. True wisdom is not only the recognition that God has sent judgment on Judah; it is above all knowledge of the Lord and his character. God reveals himself as One who practices, takes delight in, and requires kindness, justice, and righteousness. Those nations who spurn the moral integrity of God – whether Egypt or Israel, circumcised or not – will see his judgment. As such, Israel is here criticized as being uncircumcised of heart. While still practicing the outward ritual of circumcision as the sign of God’s people, their hearts are really no different than those of the pagan nations.

*May my heart, Lord, delight in kindness, justice, and righteousness. Amen.*

**Wednesday, June 12 Jeremiah 10:1-16**

*“Do not act like the other nations”*

These verses contain an extended critique of idolatry. Idolatry is described and defined in a variety of ways. Verse 2 refers to the use of astrology to foretell the future. Verses 3-5 criticize the making and veneration of a wooden image. Verse 9 notes that a wooden piece can be decorated with silver and gold and clothed in royal colors – but this does not make it divine. These images are judged in verse 15 with the claim that they are worthless and will all be destroyed. The lifeless images of other deities are contrasted with the uniqueness of the living God, who is the Creator of heaven and earth.

Much of this section is intended to instruct the people of God during the time of their exile. Not that it is irrelevant to the circumstances of Judah before the Babylonian invasion, but the text is cast in a teaching mode rather than as a list of reasons why they are being judged. The house of Israel is called to avoid the ways of the nations. Assimilation, if not outright capitulation, to a dominant culture was a real problem for Israelites among other nations.

*Reveal to me potential idols in my life, Lord, that I might turn from them. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

June 10 - 15

*The Prophet Jeremiah*

**Thursday, June 13 Jeremiah 10:17-25**

*“Correct me Lord, but please be gentle”*

In verses 17-18 Jeremiah addresses people who will soon be under siege. He advises them to gather up whatever possessions they can carry and leave the city before it is too late, for the hour of God’s judgment is at hand. Next, Jeremiah laments over the besieged nation. She has suffered hurt. Her wounds are incurable. Her shepherds (leaders) have not sought after God, nor have they conducted themselves with reference to God’s laws. They have failed, and as a result the sheep (people) suffer.

The chapter concludes with the prayer of Jeremiah which contains a frank admission that human resources are not enough to keep a person on the pathway marked out by God. God is humbly implored to correct the errant ways of the one who prays – but in a manner that reveals God’s justice without employing continued acts of judgment. There is more wisdom than resignation in the way the prayer begins. A person does not ultimately direct his or her own pathways; rather, they are in the hands of God.

*You direct our ways, Lord, and correct us when we go astray. Amen.*

**Friday, June 14 Jeremiah 11:1-17**

*“Remember the ancient covenant”*

The language of “covenant” is prevalent in this section, referring to the covenant God made with his people as he brought them out of Egyptian slavery. One may compare the basic marriage formulation (“I will be your husband, and you will be my wife”) with that of the covenant between God and Israel. Both presuppose an exclusive, intimate relationship. The covenant also contained consequences for disobedience of the covenant requirements. Judah’s veneration of other gods is such a violation (verses 9-13), and their appeal to pagan gods will do nothing to rescue them from the consequences of their waywardness.

The Lord recognizes that much, if not all, of Jeremiah’s report to the people will fall on deaf ears and hard hearts. As a result, the prophet is commanded not to pray for the people. These somber words from God are intended as a warning for the people rather than simply a message to the prophet. If they do not turn from their evil ways, not even the prayers of the prophet will save them.

*I am committed to my relationship with you, Lord, as You are to me. Amen.*

**Saturday, June 15 Jeremiah 11:18 – 12:17**

*“I was like a lamb being led to the slaughter”*

Jeremiah is shown the true intentions of neighbors from his hometown of Anathoth (a short distance north of Jerusalem). God reveals to him that they intend to humiliate him and to bring his prophetic work to an end, even to murder him. Jeremiah describes himself, therefore, as a lamb led to slaughter, indicating that he considers himself innocent of any wrongdoing. Jeremiah asks not only for deliverance, but also for God to judge those who persecute him unjustly.

Jeremiah goes on to plead his case with God. The issue that Jeremiah brings is not just that of threat to his life (although that is the primary element); it is also the question of why a righteous God allows the way of the wicked to prosper. If God is so clearly opposed to the activity of the wicked, then why not judge them and be done with it? Jeremiah prays for the destruction of the wicked because of the harm they have brought to the land and asks that they (instead of he) be taken off like sheep for the slaughter. God replies that Jeremiah is to look to the Lord for his strength and to the vindication the Lord will reveal in the future.

*When people seek to do me harm, Lord, You will be my strength. Amen.*