*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

June 17 - 22

*The Prophet Jeremiah*

**Monday, June 17 Jeremiah 13:1-14**

*“They will become like this loincloth”*

The enacted parable of the loincloth is Jeremiah’s first example of a symbolic act. He is one of several biblical persons whose acts illustrate concretely their message and even embody the gist of their spoken communication. Jeremiah later wears a yoke (chs. 27-28) and purchases property (ch. 32) as symbolic acts; the first indicated judgment to come when the people would be under the yoke of a foreign oppressor, and the second foreshadowed restoration from exile.

Just as the loincloth was to be bound to its wearer, so Israel and Judah have been formed by God to be bound to him. The verb “be bound” in verse 11 is the same word used in Genesis 2:24 to describe the man who leaves his parents to “be united” (in Elizabethan English, “cleave”) to his wife and to become “one flesh.” Israel and Judah were created to be united to the Lord. The ruining of the loincloth came about because Jeremiah removed it and buried it. So Israel and Judah – whose separation from the Lord was caused by their faithlessness – have been ruined by “burying” their relationship with God.

*Through Christ I am united with you, Father, and I will remain faithful. Amen.*

**Tuesday, June 18 Jeremiah 13:15-27**

*“Give glory to the Lord your God”*

Jeremiah utters judgments against the pride that leads to a fall. In verse 16 he commands them to give glory to the Lord before the darkness of judgment comes, calling for repentance and change on the part of the people. Verse 18-19 points to a particular source of nationalized pride, the king and queen mother. Their crowns will fall from their heads as a sign of the fall of the nation.

In verses 20-27 Jerusalem is called to see the foe from the north who comes in judgment. Should she wonder why destruction has come to her, Jeremiah quotes a proverbial saying (verse 23). Just as neither Ethiopians (Africans) nor leopards can change the distinctive color of their skin, so the evil propensity of God’s people cannot be removed by their own hand. The concluding question, “How long will you be unclean?” (verse 27), assumes that even though Jerusalem is incapable of righting herself, she could at least recognize her plight and seek the Lord, who alone can heal her failures.

*I humble myself before you, Lord, and acknowledge you ruler of my life. Amen.*

**Wednesday, June 19 Jeremiah 14:1-10**

*“Concerning the drought”*

In verses 2-6, Judah and Jerusalem mourn the devastating effects of a drought. Nothing in these verses links the drought with divine judgment; instead, they rehearse the pitiful circumstances of the people and animals in their common quest for water. Only in verses 7-9 do we see a link between the terrible circumstances of the people and their sinfulness before God. God is implored to act because his name (i.e., his reputation) is great and because his people bear his name.

The people confess their backsliding, seemingly a frank acknowledgement of their sin against God, but the language of divine judgment in verse 10 indicates that God does not accept their confession. While their words sound sincere, he knows that their hearts have wandered far from him. Another possible way to understand the prayer of verses 7-9 is that these are not the actual words of the people. Rather, it is Jeremiah’s advice to them on how to pray appropriately in the context of a drought used in judgment against them.

*When I confess my sin, Lord, my heart must not be far from you. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

June 17 - 22

*The Prophet Jeremiah*

**Thursday, June 20 Jeremiah 14:11-22**

*“Do not pray for these people”*

As on two other occasions God forbids Jeremiah to pray for the people (7:15; 11:14). That this order not to pray is here repeated for the third time may suggest that Jeremiah was not heeding God’s command. In a sense, prayer was futile in the circumstances since nothing in the actions of the people suggests any serious inclination to repentance. Similarly, their outwardly religious behavior of fasting and offerings are not acceptable to God in the absence of heartfelt obedience.

Does this mean that there are times when it is proper to give up praying for someone? Perhaps one may pray for them to come to repentance by way of divine discipline, but to pray that a person not be liable to God’s righteous response to their sinfulness is to pray against God’s purposes. Beyond discipline there may well be repentance. As Scripture attests, “The Lord disciplines those he loves” (Hebrews 12:6). In spite of their sinfulness he has not given up on his people but is seeking a way to bring them back to himself.

*Because I am your beloved child, Lord, your discipline is for my good. Amen.*

**Friday, June 21 Jeremiah 15:1-21**

*“What sorrow is mine”*

For God to dismiss the work of Moses and Samuel as helpful in the present moment of Judah’s sin is, in effect, to say that no prophetic mediator will be accepted and that judgment cannot be averted. Judgment came on Israel during the prophetic ministries of these two leaders, but total destruction had been averted through their pleadings on behalf of the people. Now, however, it will be different. Judgment to come is announced and graphically described. Captivity is mentioned, as are four kinds of affliction.

Being rejected by one’s contemporaries is deeply painful, and the human toll it takes is evident in the prophet’s candid language. The joining of this lament with the earlier announcement of judgment shows the link between the people’s rejection of God and their rejection of God’s prophet. God does not reply directly to Jeremiah’s prayer for judgment on his oppressors; instead, he reminds Jeremiah that his restoration from humiliating circumstances is simply to return to his role as spokesman for the Lord.

*Help me to “fight the good fight,” Lord, in spite of opposition. Amen.*

**Saturday, June 22 Jeremiah 16:1-21**

*“I will bring them back”*

The chapter contains the classical pattern of this book: God announces judgment on Jeremiah’s contemporaries as his righteous response to Judah’s spiritual corruption; the future, however, contains the promise of redemption from the land of exile, where Judeans surviving the Babylonian onslaught will be taken. For subsequent generations these words of judgment become words of instruction on what to avoid. For Judeans living in Babylonian exile, the prophecy about redemption provides hope for their return. For generations of God’s people after the Babylonian exile, the “second exodus” (the first being the exodus from Egypt) of the people from Babylonian captivity was testimony to the faithfulness and forgiveness of God.

The prayer of verses 19-20 addresses God the Judge as a Fortress and Protector of his people who have learned the folly of idolatry and who find security in the Lord, their Redeemer. The closing verse emphasizes God’s will to make himself known as the One whose power and might at work in history declares that he is the Lord.

*Whenever I stray, Lord, you are faithful to bring me back. Amen.*