*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

June 24 - 29

*The Prophet Jeremiah*

**Monday, June 24 Jeremiah 17:1-18**

*“The human heart is deceitful”*

The repeated reference to the corruption of the heart in these verses indicates the difficulty of Jeremiah’s prophetic work; how will people with wicked hearts listen to the righteous word of the Lord? Jeremiah, together with other biblical writers (Old and New Testament), sees sinfulness not just as a harmful deed or process but as a condition of human existence. Thus, when the Scriptures call for people to have a new heart, how can that transformation take place from the human side? It is God who must be the One to give his people a new heart so they might walk in obedience to his commandments.

A primary reason why human sinfulness is so devastating is that the condition is terminal. Corruption and sin beget more of the same, and that vicious cycle can only be broken from God’s side. Only God can heal our brokenness. Paul assumed the moral and spiritual bankruptcy of the human species, and he understood the advent of Christ as God’s decisive countermeasure (Romans 1:16 – 3:26).

*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Amen.*

**Tuesday, June 25 Jeremiah 17:19-27**

*“Do not do your work on the Sabbath”*

Jeremiah’s words about the Sabbath partake of the larger biblical teaching about the sacredness of the seventh day. The sanctification of the Sabbath is the bridge commandment in the Ten Commandments, acting as a go-between the commands to relate rightly to God and the commands to relate rightly to one’s family and neighbor. Sabbath-keeping is a pattern rooted in God’s revelation of himself (on the seventh day he rested from his work of creation), and an activity blessed by God. Although Jesus offered severe criticism of a legalistic interpretation of the Sabbath, he acknowledged its divine origin and purpose.

Jeremiah’s specific accusation concerns carrying loads on the Sabbath, (i.e., working rather than refraining from labor). Resting from work helped make the Sabbath day holy. If God’s people honor him by keeping the Sabbath, then not only Jerusalem but the various regions of Judah will continue to be inhabited, and right worship will be offered to the Lord. This is the one place in the chapter that suggests a role for repentance and renewed obedience to God’s law.

*To take time to rest, Lord, is a wonderful way to live your grace. Amen.*

**Wednesday, June 26 Jeremiah 18:1-17**

*“Go down to the potter’s shop”*

Jeremiah’s visit to the potter’s workshop and his announcement of God’s word are a symbolic act, what might be termed a parable in action. We can use our imagination to visualize the workshop and the efforts of a potter to shape wet clay into a vessel ready to be fired and then used as a container. God (the potter) has both the sovereign right and the divine ability to make and remake the clay as he sees fit.

The meaning of this illustration is clear. Just as the potter may form and reform the same clay until he is either satisfied or decides to dump the clay completely, so God can form and reform the house of Israel. This affirmation is followed by the “two-way” formulation of God’s dealing with any nation. If God announces judgment on a nation and that nation repents, that judgment can be reversed or simply canceled. Correspondingly, if God has announced good for a kingdom and it acts faithlessly, that good can also be reversed.

*You are the potter, I am the clay, Lord. Make me and mold me. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

June 24 - 29

*The Prophet Jeremiah*

**Thursday, June 27 Jeremiah 18:18-23**

*“Let’s plot a way to stop Jeremiah”*

Jeremiah’s opponents are at it again, intending to attack him verbally and not pay attention to anything he says. Their persecution of the prophet shows that they have also rejected God’s word to them that Jeremiah represents. They prefer the more comfortable words of others who claim to present God’s will to the judgmental pronouncements of Jeremiah. Here we see the three primary forms of godly communication: the priests who teach Scripture, counsel from the wise, and the word from the prophet.

In response, Jeremiah prays in a personal lament that God will judge his enemies. His harsh words come in the context of a petition that God will vindicate him from their slander. The metaphor he uses is that of a pit dug by his opponents, a pit designed to catch him. It is a hunting image, a trap laid to catch prey. Jeremiah prays, in essence, that his enemies may fall into the pit they have dug. Since they have committed an evil in attacking an innocent person, may the evil they intend fall back on them.

*You will judge those who oppose your gospel, Lord. Amen.*

**Friday, June 28 Jeremiah 19:1-15**

*“Go and buy a clay jar”*

God instructs Jeremiah to perform a symbolic act (a parable in action) with a pottery jar. He is to buy the jar and take a group of elders and priests to the Valley of Ben Hinnom where the Topheth, a place for human sacrificial rites, is located. Before he breaks the jar in the valley of slaughter and burial, Jeremiah must prophesy judgment. The failures of the kings and the people are listed as the worship of other gods, the spilling of innocent blood, and especially the worship of Baal through the burning of children in a sacrificial fire. With the breaking of the jar, Jeremiah indicates the irrevocable judgment to come. Just as the smashed earthenware cannot be repaired, Judah cannot be reformed.

Jeremiah leaves the Topheth and goes to the courtyard of the temple to proclaim that God will bring the disaster on them that he has pronounced, because they are stiff-necked and will not listen to his words. The opportunity for repentance has repeatedly been offered to them, but they are too proud to bend their necks in humility before God.

*I bow in humility before you, Lord, repenting of my sin. Amen.*

**Saturday, June 29 Jeremiah 20:1-18**

*“Pashhur had Jeremiah whipped and put in stocks”*

Pashhur represents the religious establishment, especially the priests who care for and officiate at the temple, a segment of the population who prove to be some of Jeremiah’s most persistent persecutors. He is described as the “chief officer” at the temple, which probably means among other things that he heads the personnel who guard the gates and control the activities within the temple courts. The humiliation of being placed in the stocks and beaten by a priest would have been especially galling for Jeremiah, since he was from a priestly family.

Jeremiah’s lament is linked to his humiliating and painful experience in the stocks. His words are by now familiar to readers of his book, yet at the same time shocking. The prophet is persecuted because of the word of the Lord. His opponents lie in wait to ambush him and ridicule him with his own phrase, “terror on every side,” as if to say that Jeremiah is a deluded madman who speaks incessantly about terror to come. In his frustration and bitterness Jeremiah rues the day he was born.

*When the world seeks to shame us, Lord, you lift us up. Amen.*