

**08.23.26 ~ Pentecost 13**  
**“God’s Sovereign Judgment & Mercy”**  
The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

**Words of Prophecy**

**Jeremiah 6:8-10, 16-17, 24-26** <sup>TLB</sup>

Pew Bible 653, 654

<sup>8</sup> This is your last warning, O Jerusalem. If you don’t listen, I will empty the land. <sup>9</sup> Disaster on disaster shall befall you. Even the few who remain in Israel shall be gleaned again, the Lord Almighty has said; for as a grape-gatherer checks each vine to pick what he has missed, so the remnant of my people shall be destroyed again.

<sup>10</sup> But who will listen when I warn them? Their ears are closed, and they refuse to hear. The word of God has angered them; they don’t want it at all.

<sup>16</sup> Yet the Lord pleads with you still: Ask where the good road is, the godly paths you used to walk in, in the days of long ago. Travel there, and you will find rest for your souls. But you reply, “No, that is not the road we want!” <sup>17</sup> I set watchmen over you who warned you: “Listen for the sound of the trumpet! It will let you know when trouble comes.” But you said, “No! We won’t pay any attention!”

<sup>24</sup> We have heard the fame of their armies, and we are weak with fright. Fright and pain have gripped us like that of women in travail. <sup>25</sup> Don’t go out to the fields! Don’t travel the roads! For the enemy is everywhere, ready to kill; we are terrorized at every turn.

<sup>26</sup> O Jerusalem, pride of my people, put on mourning clothes and sit in ashes; weep bitterly as for an only son. For suddenly the destroying armies will be upon you.

**Leader: These Are God’s Words of Warning.**

**People: Thanks be to God!**

**Words of Instruction**

**Romans 9:22-28, 30-33** <sup>NLT</sup>

Pew Bible 984

<sup>22</sup> In the same way, even though God has the right to show his anger and his power, he is very patient with those on whom his anger falls, who are destined for destruction. <sup>23</sup> He does this to make the riches of his glory shine even brighter on those to whom he shows mercy, who were prepared in advance for glory. <sup>24</sup> And we are among those whom he selected, both from the Jews and from the Gentiles.

<sup>25</sup> Concerning the Gentiles, God says in the prophecy of Hosea,

“Those who were not my people,  
I will now call my people.  
And I will love those  
whom I did not love before.”

<sup>26</sup> And,

“Then, at the place where they were told,  
‘You are not my people,’  
there they will be called  
‘children of the living God.’”

<sup>27</sup> And concerning Israel, Isaiah the prophet cried out,  
 “Though the people of Israel are as numerous as the sand of the seashore,  
 only a remnant will be saved.  
<sup>28</sup> For the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth  
 quickly and with finality.”

*Israel's Unbelief*

<sup>30</sup> What does all this mean? Even though the Gentiles were not trying to follow God's standards, they were made right with God. And it was by faith that this took place. <sup>31</sup> But the people of Israel, who tried so hard to get right with God by keeping the law, never succeeded. <sup>32</sup> Why not? Because they were trying to get right with God by keeping the law instead of by trusting in him. They stumbled over the great rock in their path. <sup>33</sup> God warned them of this in the Scriptures when he said,  
 “I am placing a stone in Jerusalem that makes people stumble,  
 a rock that makes them fall.  
 But anyone who trusts in him  
 will never be disgraced.”

**Leader: These Are Apostle Paul's Words.**

**People: Thanks be to God!**

**Please pray with me:**

Sovereign Lord, help us to reconcile your judgment and mercy. Help us to repent our sins and seek your forgiveness. Open our ears and minds to hear Jeremiah's warnings even today. Let us be humble enough to seek your grace and mercy as the apostle Paul did and taught his disciples. Let us surrender to your sovereignty in all aspects of our lives, especially our stubborn will. May we yield to your direction and your guidance in all we do. We are grateful to be together to worship and learn from your teachings, so please reveal yourself in these Scriptures. Let us listen closely this last week to your servants Jeremiah and Paul to apply their words to our own lives. Speak through this message and messenger. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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This is our “last” week in Jeremiah and Romans, officially in this series, that is. Never have I intentionally placed a prophet and evangelist in parallel Scriptures for teaching before, but I am glad it worked out so well. For me it has been illuminating to study two faith leaders 650 years apart who were so deeply and strongly connected to God. Both writers' lives and civilizations were filled with conflict, judgment, greed, idolatry, guilt, forgiveness, God's law, covenants, and a calling to teach and preach. I hope there were one or two new understandings that came from

this short summer study of sin and grace. In early June, we began our mini theme of “Hope in Paul’s letter to the Romans” with God’s covenant with Abraham to generations of believers and continuing the Easter story through Paul’s accounts of the living and resurrected Jesus. If you remember only one thing, make it about having a right relationship with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. Yes, we spoke a lot about confession, sin, and judgment, but God’s mercy and grace come only through Jesus. Remember, the sermons are on our website, under “Services.”

Jeremiah, our prophetic voice of warning, in Chapter 6 uses a loud alarm to announce Babylon’s coming attack on Jerusalem. The people of Jerusalem in the Southern Kingdom of Judah had been warned and challenged to repent of their sins of idolatry, greed, and lust. The city’s wickedness was worse than all of Judah’s unbelief. The people would not listen to Jeremiah’s warnings that God would raise up leaders to destroy them as their punishment. God had to follow through with his judgment. They would lose everything: their homes, wealth, income, family members, and even the city’s infrastructure. Roads later had to be rebuilt. Through Jeremiah, God tried to warn them to stay on God’s path of righteousness. Judah, however, rejected God’s law and so rejected God himself. The coming desolation would cause anguish and despair beyond any expectation. God’s attempts to spare them failed so judgment was inevitable. You can read more about this in 2 Kings 25 and 2 Chronicles 35-36.

Fear of their approaching enemy, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, was real; the people were warned to flee back to the Godly paths of the past but rigidly declined to do anything! It was as if they could not hear

the warnings. They feared being overtaken by the enemy but did nothing to prepare themselves or return to God's care in surrender. A small remnant was spared because perhaps, they did call on God to save them. Jeremiah called them foolish and sinful people, but what I hear is stubbornness and hardened hearts. Verses 16 & 17 are key for us even today: "Ponder your paths!" the prophet writes. Don't just go along with the crowd. You too are called into belief, discipleship, and ministry, not just to drift through life accumulating status or stuff as our culture encourages.

By Romans chapter 9, the context was similar: disobedience, greed, idolatry, and lust were approved cultural values. Even Christ followers were slipping away from God. In the church, Jewish participation was decreasing while Gentile involvement became dominant. Paul writes to demonstrate that despite human stubbornness, God has not abandoned his people who believe in Jesus or why he sent him for redemption. Many could not understand this, so he proclaims that it is God's prerogative to offer salvation to whomever he calls: "Those who were not my people, I will now call my people. And I will love those whom I did not love before (Romans 9:25.)" Paul says that a potter (in this case, creator God) has the right to make a piece for any purpose, either common or noble. It is not the jar's choice, but the potter's choice, and in our case, the creator's. How dare we judge who deserves God's mercy or salvation?

After all the arguments Paul has used so far to persuade the obstinate people to repent, he finally explains that it is God's decision as to whom he will show mercy. Many Jews who were carefully instructed in God's teachings and compassion have turned against God, so they will

**not** be saved for eternity. Coming from a legacy belief of meritorious salvation from following the 613 Levitical laws, the people are having a hard time understanding what faith is and why these Gentiles are promised eternal life after they, Jews and God's chosen people, have done all the work to achieve mercy! But he does not give up. <sup>2</sup>“My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief <sup>3</sup>for my people, my Jewish brothers and sisters (Romans 9:2 <sup>NLT</sup>.)”

This is personal for Paul, since he spent his life with the Pharisees until he met Jesus. He spends the rest of Romans trying to explain how the faith of the Gentiles makes them heirs to Abraham's faith. If you read on to Chapters 10 and 11, you'll come back full circle to where we began and how they will be grafted into the body of Christ. That's how and where we began this study. Any true believer who seeks God's grace and forgiveness builds a right relationship with him and becomes saved. God provides mercy to those he chooses. Just like the potter, he chooses to create “vessels of wrath” or “vessels of mercy” among his promised people. Which vessel are you?

Matthew Henry, turn of the century Biblical scholar, reminds us that “Sanctification is the preparation of the soul for glory, making it meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light. This is **God's work**.” Why do we try to do the work of omnipotent God? If our goal as Christ followers is to model his example, then we must be obedient and humble, surrendering to the calling of God in our lives. It is our job to build up our faith and ask God to help us live it out well. That is all we can do to become sanctified. God will do the rest. Yes, we must confess our sins, obey his word and teachings, share the Gospel with others, teach others

about Jesus, and help people as we are called to do. God will do the rest, so why do we fear judgment so much? Are we like the people in Jerusalem in Jeremiah's day? Fearful, rigid, foolish? By no means! We are empowered and embodied by the Holy Spirit! Our advocate goes before us, beside us, and behind us to redeem our mistakes. Let us be stirred by Paul's letter to the Romans, not be afraid of it. Above all, God is merciful to save his children. Are you one? Keep praying, keep asking, keep studying, keep serving, and keep coming back to worship. Amen. ||

**Please pray with me:** Thank you Lord for the guidance you give us through your Scriptures each week. May we never forget that you have called us into relationship and glory. Help us to stay close to you through your word, your prophets, evangelists, apostles, teachers, and shepherds. Remind us to obey, listen, and serve. Transform our hardened hearts, Lord, so that we may receive and answer your call to different ministries. Help us to feel your love and to express it to others every day in some way. Be with us in our meeting facility decisions. We pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen.