

The Temple Sermon

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[0 : 0 0] seeking the Lord's blessing. Let us now turn back to the portion that we read together in the book of Jeremiah chapter 7 and we'll read that verse 3.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, amend your ways and your deeds and I will let you dwell in this place. Do not trust in these deceptive words. This is a temple of the Lord's Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord. Jeremiah 7 is often called Jeremiah's temple sermon because God commanded him to preach it at the temple. There are those also who would prefer to call it notes of a temple sermon. However, one can just imagine Jeremiah standing at the temple gate. That would be the entrance, the entranceway between the outer and the inner courtyards of the temple. And as the people made their way up to the temple steps to worship, it was there that Jeremiah would give his message, which was done probably very briefly and also repeated because the people would be moving along past the prophet. As the message was to be preached to all the people of Judah, it was probably done at the time of one of the feasts when many people of the nation came to Jerusalem came to Jerusalem to worship. Now this sermon is reprinted for us again in chapter 26. With this additional detail, in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came from the Lord. Thus says the Lord, stand in the court of the Lord's house and speak to all the Lord's house and speak to all the cities of Judah that come to worship in the house of the Lord.

All the words that I command you to speak to them do not hold back a word. This information gives us the background to this sermon. The sermon was preached at a time of national crisis for Judah. Josiah, the king who brought much reformation into Judah after the book of the law was discovered in a temple, was killed in a battle. And his son Jehoahaz came to the throne in his place, but only for three months before Pharaoh Necho carried him away into Egypt where he died.

And Pharaoh Necho installed Jehoiakim to the throne. Now Judah was not simply at a crisis politically, but also spiritually. Because after the death of Josiah, sadly Judah slipped back into great spiritual darkness. So God commanded Jeremiah to go to the temple and preach the message that we have here in chapter 7 and reprinted for us again in chapter 26. And the main text of the message we have here in verse 3, thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. Now this message was delivered to a religiously observant people. We could say about them that they were true church goers. They were walking up the temple steps, possibly bringing a sacrifice with them in order to worship God. They were very devout people, and yet it is to them that Jeremiah was to preach, and it was to them that he was to say, amend your ways. It is a reminder to us that religious observance without moral obedience cannot save.

John Calvin puts it like this, sacrifices are of no importance or value before God unless those who offer them holy devote themselves to God with a sincere heart. We must remember that justification is always accompanied by sanctification. We cannot separate the two. Justification where God declares a person as righteous is always accompanied with sanctification where God makes that person holy. This people were strangers really to the reality of heart submission to the Lord. Isaiah said of the people, because this people draw near with their mouth and honour me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and the fear of me is a commandment taught by men. Jesus said at one time that the people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth and honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

[6 : 02] The people of Judah had come to put their trust in the outward observance of religion. They had put their faith in a building instead of the living God.

Do not trust, says Jeremiah, in these deceptive words. This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord. They thought that outward observance of religion would save them.

They thought as long as they went to the temple, and as long as they brought their sacrifice to the temple, that that that was sufficient to save them.

They thought that as long as they fulfilled their religious obligations, that they could do whatever they wanted with the rest of their lives. As long as they went to the temple, they could do for the rest of the week whatever they wanted with their lives.

And Jeremiah says to them, Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. These people were treating the temple with great superstition because they thought that observing temple rituals was enough for salvation.

[7 : 30] They wanted faith without practice. They wanted covenant blessings without covenant obedience.

They wanted justification without sanctification. They wanted to be declared righteous before God and then go on living in sin.

They were like a person who wants the death of the righteous. But to live the life of the unrighteous. A person who wants to go to heaven, but live the life of sin.

And these two ways cannot be together. Jesus said, No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

And this is a warning to anyone who wants to be justified before God by religious observance only.

[8 : 42] How many put their trust for salvation in church attendance? And the fact that they have been baptized, and the fact that they have their daily devotions.

While all these things are good and worthy, while all these things are good and worthy, to attend church, to be baptized, to do your daily devotions are good and worthy.

Nevertheless, salvation is only found in a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is always a danger to put our confidence in outward religion. As long as we do so, the devil will never trouble you.

He will leave you at peace. If you are today putting your trust in outward religion, and your attendance upon the church, and being baptized, and the fact of your daily devotions, if you are putting your trust of salvation in that, the devil will not trouble you.

[10 : 00] He will leave you alone. Because he knows that there is more to salvation than all that. That salvation means a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jeremiah says, Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. And that is the way of the devil. He is always out to deceive you with lying words.

This is how it began in the garden of Eden. Let's hear the words. Did God actually say, You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?

And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden. But God said, You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden. Neither shall you touch it lest you die.

But the serpent said to the woman, You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you'll be like God, knowing good and evil.

[11 : 08] So when the woman saw that the tree was good for fruit, and there was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of it fruit and ate.

And she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he did eat. And the devil has found that method to be a good method.

And he still adopts that method even to this day. He comes with deceptive words, and people fall for it.

Jesus said, You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him.

When he lies, he speaks out of his own character. For he is a liar and a father of lies. And you see, the tragedy here is that the people of Judah thought that all was well, because they attended the temple.

[12 : 18] They went about their outward religious rituals. They went to the temple on the Sabbath, and then for the rest of the week, they forgot about God.

They were not obedient. There was nothing wrong with the temple in Jerusalem. The people were supposed to go there for worship.

There is nothing wrong with going to church, or being baptized, or being a member in a particular church, or doing daily devotions. But the problem comes when you put your trust in those things instead of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We must trust in Christ alone for salvation. In the New Testament, we have Paul, who gives us a great list of what was true of him in religious observance, and in which he trusted for salvation.

But then, he goes on and he says, But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.

[13 : 48] For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things, and to count on us rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.

In other words, what Paul here is telling us is, put no confidence in the flesh, put no confidence in your own works, put no confidence in the flesh, but trust in the righteousness that comes from God, and is by faith in Jesus Christ.

He is telling me and you to trust in Christ alone for salvation. Basically, it is the same message that Jeremiah was given to the people of Judah, not to put their trust in the flesh, in that which was outward, but to put their trust in the living God.

It is amazing that the many things that man will set his trust upon for salvation. The list would be endless.

If we began to make a list from this very moment of the things that people put their trust upon for salvation, it would be an endless list. And they put their trust upon those many things, except the one thing that is needful, and that is trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[15 : 33] The people of Judah were quite content as long as they attended the temple with their sacrifice. They gave no thought of how they lived the rest of the week.

The rest of the week they were not obedient, but living sinful lives. They said, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.

But God said, amend your ways and your deeds. And God gave them a catalogue of sins that they were guilty of and to which they never gave a thought.

Let's see our catalogue of the list. If you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harem, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave a fold to your fathers forever.

Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that ye have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house which is called by my name and say, we are delivered, only to go on doing all these abominations.

[16 : 57] The sad thing here is really Judah's false confidence. The people of Judah were guilty of all those sins that we have mentioned.

They followed other gods, they burnt incense to Baal, they neglected their social responsibilities to the fatherless and the widow, and so on.

You see, God requires not merely attempting the temper, but he also requires of us a right behavior from the people.

And it is only when that is present that the worship of the temple becomes meaningful and not an act of pretense.

They forgot about justice, they forgot about their social responsibilities to the fatherless and the widow and so on. As long as they attended the temple and they could cry out the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, they were quite at ease.

[18 : 13] But for the rest of the week, their behavior was something that did not bring any delight to God. How important it is that faith is followed by practice.

how important it is that our worship is followed by practice. I wonder what catalog of sins that the Lord could bring before me and you.

And the thing is that we would be found guilty of them all. These people were in the temple of the Lord and yet they were living sinful lives.

They would leave the temple to burn incense to Baal. They would leave the temple and they would pass over the fatherless and the widow. Even in the temple of the Lord there might be timetabling their weekly program which kept God out and allowed sin in.

How could they do all this which is cataloged against them here and stand in the temple of the Lord and say we are delivered. only to go on doing all these deeds that were abomination in the sight of God.

[19 : 40] To be a believer on Sunday is easy. It is far more difficult to be a believer on Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday and the rest of the week.

it is important that our faith is followed by practice. What the people of Judah was doing was they were devoting justification and sanctification.

They wanted to be justified without being sanctified. God says to them has this house which is called by my name become a den of robbers in your eyes.

Behold I myself have seen it declares the Lord. They went to the temple as a hideout thinking that God would simply pass over the deeds that they committed during the week.

But there is no hiding place. There is no hiding place from God because God is omniscient. He knows all things. God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.

[20 : 51] Jeremiah was instructed to bring all this before the people but they did not want to know. They were more comfortable continuing to think that there was nothing seriously wrong in their relationship with God and that is a dangerous place to be.

The Christian daily such as his relationship with God. They thought that there was nothing wrong in their relationship with God as long as they attended the temple rituals.

They thought everything was fine. They thought it was possible to live as they pleased and then come and be accepted by God when they worshipped him in the temple.

They did not grasp how sinful they were. They forgot that they had to do with a holy God. You see, the Christian through Christian is a person who is always mindful of his sinful heart.

He knows that the seed of every sin that is possible to be committed is in his heart or her heart. And therefore they cry out, O wretched man that I am.

[22 : 27] And what does God do? Well, he takes the people of Judah on a historical trip. He says, go now to my place that was Shiloh where I made my name dwell at first and see what I did to it because of the evil of my people Israel.

Shiloh was where the temple used to be. It was here that God made his dwelling with Israel. But if the people would go to Shiloh in Jeremiah's day, Shiloh was just a pile of rubbish.

Archaeological evidence shows that Shiloh was destroyed twice. Once by the Philistines and once by the Assyrians when they took Israel or the northern tribes into captivity they destroyed Shiloh.

What God is saying to the people through Jeremiah is go to Shiloh where God once was where he made his dwelling. He's there no longer.

His dwelling is there no longer. Shiloh now he says represents the absence and the abandonment of God. The people of Judah thought to themselves that will never happen to us.

[23 : 50] We have the temple of the Lord. They knew what happened to Shiloh but they did not realize it could happen to them as well.

But God said to them and now because you have done all these things declares the Lord and when I spoke to you persistently you did not listen and when I called you you did not answer.

Therefore I will do to the house that is called by my name and in which you trust and the place that I gave to you and to your fathers as I did to Shiloh.

And I will cast you out of my sight as I cast out all your kinsmen all the offspring of Ephraim. The ruin of Shiloh was to stand as a warning to Judah and as a warning to me and you.

In our land in Scotland today there are so many places where God used to be worshipped where churches were full and today they are places where God are no longer worshipped.

[25 : 05] Many of them turned over to be places of entertainment. A reminder that no building no congregation has a permanent hold on God's presence.

But more personally see what he says I spoke to you persistently you did not listen and when I called you you did not answer.

How often has the Lord spoken to you? How often has the Lord spoken to me? How often has the Lord called on you? But you give him no answer.

He says I spoke to you persistently it wasn't just once or twice but continuously calling on you. But you do not listen and you do not give an answer.

Here Proverbs 1 because I have called and you refuse to listen have stretched my hand and no one has hid it because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof I also will laugh at your calamity.

[26 : 31] Now this picture shows us how solemn it is to think of God laughing. You know it's bringing before us in a picture forum how solemn the matter is.

I will also laugh at your calamity. I will mock when terror strikes you when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a wind-wind when distress and anguish come upon you.

Then they will call upon me but I will not answer. They will seek me diligently but do not find me because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord would have none of my counsel despised all my reproof.

Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way and have their fill of their own devices for the simple are killed by the turning away and the complacency of fools destroys them.

But whosoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease without dread of disaster. And there he brings before us what the end is going to be for those who will not give heed as he persistently calls you and he persistently calls you through his word, he persistently calls you through the gospel.

[27 : 53] here he says in this chapter that he sent prophet after prophet after prophet to them with the same message amend your ways and your deeds and the same message has been sent from the gospel the call is to you and it's a persistent call, it's a continuous call but you give no answer you do not listen and here in proverbs we are told what the end will be of all those who do not give heed and who do not listen.

Then in verse 16 we read as for you do not pray for this people or lift up or cry or pray for them do not intercede with me for I will not hear.

You know while God's span of intercession is hard for us to understand as I am sure it was also hard for Jeremiah to understand see what God does he takes Jeremiah and he says do you not see what they are doing in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem the children gather wood the fathers kindle fire and the woman made dough to make cakes for the queen of heaven and the poor I drink offerings to other gods to provoke me to anger what is interesting here is that Jeremiah has shown the collapse of family values here we have a family harmony they are gathering together they are working together the families come closer together but sadly at the same time they are moving further away from God and you find that families come in harmony and closer together on the Lord's day but what do they do they go to certain entertainment or certain sports or certain this or certain that but they never come under the gospel they are moving away further from God and God says is it I whom they provoke declares the Lord is it not themselves to their own shame therefore thus says the Lord

God behold my anger and my wrath will be poured out on this place upon man and beast upon the trees of the field and the fruit of the ground it will burn and not be quenched we must look at this at the beginning of God's judgment upon this place Judah a prayerless community is a sign of God's judgment when families come together for every kind of event but for the worship of God and when prayer is not made a prayerless community is a sign of God's judgment thus says the Lord of hosts the God of Israel act you upon offerings to your sacrifices and eat the flesh for on the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning pontiffries and sacrients but this command I gave them obey my voice and I will be your

God and you shall be my people and walk in all the way that I commanded you that it may be well with you the Lord is pointing out here that not only does he require their worship but he also requires their obedience our obedience is very important to the Lord just as much as our worship is Paul writing to the Thessalonians says for the Lord Jesus has revealed from heaven with his mighty angels and flaming fire inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus now these are very solemn words not only is there vengeance upon those who do not know God but the same vengeance upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus you know you may think that the sin is great about those places where the gospel isn't being preached people who do not know

[32 : 21] God who haven't had the gospel but you know your sin today if you're an unbeliever here this morning your sin is more heinous in the sight of God than the sin of those who do not have heard the gospel because to you persistently the Lord has called you invited you commanded you to come and to trust in him for salvation and what have you done he has prepared a table before you but you refuse to sit and eat think if you were a host and you prepared a table a dinner table and you invited people and they came and they said no we do not wish to eat at your table how would you feel well that's exactly what you're doing with the gospel because the Lord has set out the table and he's asking you to partake of the provisions on his table salvation of your soul and you're saying no no no and on the day where you'll be accountable the infliction of

God's anger and God's wrath upon you will be far more than upon those who were never given that invitation or that command they will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his mind when he comes on that day to be glorified in his sins and to be marveled at all among whom have believed because our testament to you was believed remember the words of Samuel to Saul has the Lord has great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices in obeying the voice of the Lord behold to obey his better than sacrifice and to listen than the fat of rise the Lord's requirements is not simply worship but also an inner commitment to him but what was the response of the people of Judah to Jeremiah said but they did not obey or incline their ear but walked in their own counsel and in the stubbornness of their evil heart and went backward and not forward from the day that your fathers came out of the land of

Egypt to this day I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them day after day yet they did not listen to me or incline their ear but stiffened their neck they did worse than their fathers so you shall speak all these words to them but they will not listen you know here is the great words that God is saying to Judah because of their response they did not obey or incline it and maybe that is what the Lord is saying about you today he has persistently sent preacher after preacher after preacher with the same message to you and you've heard it time and time and time again but what has your response been the same as the people of Judah you have not obeyed or inclined your ear but you have walked in your own counsels in your own wills and the stubbornness of your own evil heart persistently he was sending your servants persistently he has been calling you but day after day week after week year after year you have continued in your refusal so you shall speak all these words to them but they will not listen to you you you you know this must have been very hard on

Jeremiah here Jeremiah has been told by God you're going to speak and call up people and you're calling them to repentance you're calling them to put their trust in you they're not going to listen to you the same as said of Isaiah God says go and preach to the people but they're not going to listen to you you know one of the hard things for a preacher is to be giving the message of God to a people and knowing that there are many that will not listen to them you shall call on them but they will not answer you and you shall say to them this is a nation that did not obey the voice of the Lord their God and did not accept discipline truth has perished it is cut off from their lips you see the greatest famine and judgment that can come upon us as a nation and as a people and as individuals is when truth is perished when there is no truth in what we do when we give lip service and do not live out the truth and he says cut off your hair and cast it away raise a lamentation on the bare heights for the

Lord hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath now to us this may seem a strange command but in biblical times shaving one's head was a sign of sorrow and repentance hair in biblical times was looked upon as a woman's crowning glory and of course the hair was also part of the Nazarite ceremony who was a sign of their consecration to the Lord as a sign they were not allowed to cut their hair unless they became unclean when they were required to cut the hair what we have here in these verses that may look to us repentance and your ways and your deeds and I will let you dwell in this place what is required it is to trust and obey the Lord to come to him in sorrow and repentance and I will let you dwell in this place and this place might be a reference to the temple or the city or the land it really does not matter as they were all part of

[38 : 51] God's blessing for the people what he is saying is this amend your ways and your deeds trust and obey the Lord come to him in sorrow and repentance and you will receive his blessing his blessing if I and you are going to know the blessing of God in salvation we need to give heed to these words amend your ways and your deeds and I will let you dwell in this place in other words he is saying trust and obey the Lord come to him in sorrow and in repentance and you will receive the blessing of the Lord people say well where is the blessing of the Lord in our day and in our generation church attendances in decline immorality is on the increase the faith the

Christian faith is trampled on their feet those who govern over us has no respect for God or his law where is God's blessing well I ask you that that's not the question I should be asking or you should be asking the question I and you should be asking is where is my repentance where is my repentance how can I look for God's blessing without repentance repentance comes first and when there's repentance in our lives in the lives of the nation in the lives of our people in our own individual personal life then we will know God's blessing we will know God's covenant blessing so what's my call to you today it is this repent come and trust in the Lord and obey the Lord come to him in sorrow and repentance amend your ways and your deeds and allow you dwell in this place may the Lord bless our thoughts