

I Will Remember Their Sins No More

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[0:00] We can turn back to our reading in Jeremiah chapter 31. Read the words at verse 34. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord.

For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin. No more. These words in verse 34 are in light of what comes before it.

They are verse 31 down to that point where the Lord speaks there of days that are coming, and I will make a new covenant. God is going to make a new covenant with his people and part of this covenant where he speaks here is that their sins will be remembered no more.

But how do we get to that point? How do we reach that point where God is saying these words, and how do they become meaningful for us today, and especially as we look ahead to preparing ourselves for Sunday for the Lord's table, as we will come to remember the Lord's death.

On Sunday morning, we were looking at the beginning of this passage, the end of chapter 30 into chapter 31. And there we were seeing how God shows his grace to his people.

[1:28] We saw it in a number of different ways. We saw at the end of chapter 30 how God was speaking about a storm that was coming, and it was a gracious warning.

A storm is coming, and they would be taken into the wilderness. But then we saw, as you go into chapter 31, how there is a renewal, a renewing that's going to come.

But before that comes, he speaks to them about how he'll be with them in the wilderness. In verse 2 of chapter 31, he gave a gracious reminder to them of those who would seek him.

Those who sought him would find grace in the wilderness. So that even as they were away from the Lord, that there was grace for them. And then as we went on from there, we saw how God reminds them of a gracious renewal, that he is going to take his people back, going to return them from exile.

And part of it was that homes that they had lost would be rebuilt. Harvests that they had lost would come again. And the sorrow that they had would be turned into joy.

[2:35] All of these things were said once again. They were going to come again. But perhaps the greatest renewal would be the right worship of God, as we saw in verse 6 of chapter 31, where it says, For there shall be a day when watchmen will call in the hill country of Ephraim, Arise, and let us go to Zion, to the Lord our God.

To the Lord our God. There is this relationship that is restored, and especially when it comes to worshipping God as he deserves. Tonight, I want to continue in this chapter.

I want to continue looking at the words that we have before us and see how this renewal comes, and just what it means for the people, how they come to know it, and the blessings that it gives.

God is speaking here through Jeremiah. Jeremiah. He's speaking through his prophet. And as we saw on Sunday, Jeremiah's ministry was a long ministry, 50 years, and yet no one was listening. No one was listening. They weren't listening. But a day would come when they would hear God speaking, when they would see their need of him.

[3:53] And when God speaks through his word, we know it today. He speaks to us through it. But we also know a day is coming when we will speak with God face to face.

And God's word is preparing us for that. To ask us, are we ready to meet with the Lord? What if that was tonight?

We're preparing ourselves for the Lord's day, for a communion weekend, but there's no certainty that the Lord would not come tonight. And what would you say?

How would you justify yourself before God? Are you ready for it? Well, it's by looking at God's word that we see where our confidence can be.

And it's not in ourselves. And I want us to look at four verses through this chapter this evening. We're going to come back to this chapter again another time. But this evening, I want us to look at four verses.

[4:59] And I want us to see there are questions in these verses. And there are questions there for ourselves to ask. And that perhaps we do ask, perhaps we are asking.

Where can we truly find rest? We're going to look at verse 11 and ask the question, who can save us? We're going to look at verse 21 and ask, where can I go?

We're going to look at verse 29 and ask, what can I say? And then we're going to look at verse 34 and ask, what will I know? So the first thing we're going to look at is verse 11 and ask that question, who can save us?

Read these words again in verse 11. For the Lord has ransomed Jacob and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. Jacob is not an individual here.

It's a people. The people who God is taking captive. The people who have sinned against God. Who have turned away from God.

[6:10] Their sin is going to have consequences. Where they're going to be taken captive by a foreign nation. A powerful invading nation. And in their captivity, the big question would be, who can save us?

Who can save us? Because as you go on in the Old Testament, as you see God bringing that judgment down upon them, taking them into captivity, you see just how powerful, how wicked these nations that took God's people captive were.

They were a powerful nation, not just locally in a context, but far and wide. And so as God's people are taken captive, there would seem to be no way out for them.

And so that question would often be on their lips. Who can save us? How are we going to escape? They would have despair. They would feel helpless.

And it's that same age-old question that we see throughout Scripture and even to this very day. In different situations.

[7:26] Who can save us? In Psalm 4, we sung it on Sunday morning. There is a question there in verse 6. There are many who say, who will show us some good?

Who will show us some good? And the psalmist goes on to say, lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord. There's a question, but there's an answer in that psalm as well.

As you go into the New Testament, you see the same question. Who can save us? This is asked on a number of different occasions. Two examples. The rich young ruler who came to Jesus in Mark 10, verse 17, and said, Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

Who will save us? How can we be saved? The Philippian jailer in Acts 16, verse 30, he brought them out and said, Sir, what must I do to be saved?

It's a recurring question. It's a question in every generation. Has it been your question? Is it your question even tonight?

[8:42] Because it's a question I'm sure we've all had. And maybe we still have. Because as we read in these scriptures, those kinds of questions, the rich young ruler, the Philippian jailer, there's a sense of what can I do?

And that's what have been the thoughts of the people here in Jeremiah's day as well. Taken captive, taken into captivity. What can we do? How can we be saved?

And as we look here, we see that our attention is taken away from self and onto another. And that's often the case as well as you read through these scriptures.

Psalm 4 has that answer, Lord, shine upon us with your light. The rich young ruler is told quite plainly by Jesus, go and sell all that you have and come and follow me.

The Philippian jailer, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. The attention is taken away from self onto the Lord. That's where verse 11 takes us here as well.

[9:48] For the Lord has ransomed Jacob and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. Who can save us? Only the Lord.

Their enemy was a nation. Who's your enemy and who's my enemy tonight? Because we have an enemy. The enemy is sin.

And the enemy is the devil. And when we know the power of sin, when we know the temptation of the devil, we're so often left in that point where we ask, who can save us?

Who can save us when sin leaves us in despair? Well, this question in verse 11, who can save us? The answer is there for us.

Only the Lord. Only the Lord can save us from the hands that are too strong for us. The power of sin.

[10:51] And God is powerful. And what you see in these words in verse 11, there's two words there, ransomed and redeemed. They're important words for us.

Who can save us? Who can save us? As we sung in Psalm 49, who can redeem a life? Who can pay that sufficient price?

None of us. But God is here saying, the Lord has ransomed. The Lord has redeemed. The Lord has paid the price.

That is what we come to remember this week. We cannot save ourselves. We are coming in dependence upon the only one who can save us.

As a shorter catechism puts it, who is the redeemer of God's elect? The only redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ.

[11:52] Because there is no other. Who can save us? Who can save you? The Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot pay a price.

We cannot do anything from ourselves. Release from captivity. For these people then was dependent on the Lord. Release from our captivity and sin is dependent on the Lord's intervention too.

He is the one who intervenes. He is the one who pays the price. That is who we come to remember. Secondly then we see in verse 21, we ask the question, where can I go?

Verse 21 says, set up road markers for yourself. Make yourself guideposts. Consider well the highway, the road by which you went. Return, O virgin, return to these your cities.

Where can I go? Life is full of choices. And one of the main choices you see as you read through Jeremiah that's often put to the people, the main choice you see is which way are you going to go?

[13:12] Are you going to go your own way? Or are you going to go the Lord's way? When you go back to the early chapters into chapter 6 of Jeremiah and verse 16, there you see a decision made by the people.

The Lord speaks in verse 16 of chapter 6 and he says, stand by the roads and look and ask for the ancient paths where the good way is and walk in it and find rest for your souls.

But then you have the response of the people. But they said, we will not walk in it. The choice was put before them there. Stand and look and ask, which way are you going?

Where are you going? And God shows them, this is the way that you should go. And there you will find rest for your souls. And they say, no, we will not walk in it.

But where does that lead them? Where does it take them? To the very situation we're seeing as you go through Jeremiah, it's this idea where God is going to intervene and take them into captivity.

[14:24] He is going to take them into the wilderness, into a far off foreign land. Choices have consequences. And that's made very clear for us throughout Jeremiah, throughout the word of God.

Where does sin lead us? As we saw earlier on Sunday morning, as we're looking at the early part, it leads us into the wilderness at arm's length from God.

It leaves us lost, not knowing where to turn. So where can we go? Here is a people who are lost. And when we are in sin in the wilderness, we too are lost. And we can ask, where can I go? Well, verse 21 reminds us where we can go.

It says, set up road markers for yourself. Make yourself guideposts. What is he saying here?

Guideposts, markers, would have been probably stone cairns that people would have set up as they were journeying around.

[15:34] So if they were going far from one city maybe to another, or going out into the wilderness to find their way back, they would set up these stone cairns so that they would know what direction to go in.

And that's what God is reminding them here. He is reminding them that as they are taken into captivity, to remember where they have come from.

Make for yourselves, guideposts, consider well the highway, the road by which you went. And then it says, return, O virgin Israel, return to these, your city.

So there's a going out and there's a coming back. And that's our situation too. When sin takes us into the wilderness, where can we go?

We can return to God. Throughout this chapter there's so much imagery you would just associate with the prodigal son. He went into a far off land, he went into the wilderness, he squandered his wealth.

[16:42] But what happens when it says he came to his senses? He remembered his father's house. He remembered where he had come from. And he started that journey back.

And that is the situation for every sinner. That as we go away from God into the wilderness to find our way back, we look for the signposts, the markers, the things that are put before us to remember where we have come from and to return to God.

It's a bit like if you go on a coastal walk now or if you go the West Highland Way. As you're walking along, you'll find posts or cairns or things, markers put there to show you that you're on the right track, that you're going the right way.

It might even give you an indication of how far to the next one and point you in the right direction. People have gone that way before. And as you look at this chapter, as you look at verse 21, there's certainly a reminder there for us that the people were going to go on a journey.

They were not going to be alone and that they would return. But that's the story of salvation. A people who drift away from God but who can find a way back.

[18:06] Through God's ministering His Word, through God's grace, by His Spirit, He works. The prodigal son reminds us of that.

There is a father who longs for us to return. Where can we go? We can go to the only one who gives that welcome, who gives that warmth of us coming back.

How often does sin leave you asking, where can I go? Where can I go with this? How can I find help?

Come, the Word of God says. Return. Return, O virginus. Return to these, your cities. The prodigal son is returned to my father's house.

To us, it is to return to God. There is a way. There is a place to go. To go to the Father.

[19:07] Third thing we see here is verse 29. What can I say? Verse 29, In those days they shall no longer say, the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge.

It's one of these sayings that you find in Ezekiel. Ezekiel speaks a bit more about this in chapter 18.

The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge.

You can read that later for yourselves. But behind it all is a sense of blame. Sense of blame.

Because when you read it in Ezekiel, you see that they are passing the buck.

They are saying it's not us who sinned. It's our fathers. It's our forefathers. It's their fault. They are looking for someone to blame.

And that is something that is in our nature because of sin. We are looking to pass the buck. It goes right back to Genesis chapter 3 verse 12 where the man said, the woman whom you gave to be with me she gave me fruit of the tree and I ate.

[20:24] Whose fault? It's somebody else's. It's the woman you gave me. It's almost like blaming God there as well. So there's a sense of who can we blame?

Are you like that when it comes to sin? It's somebody else's fault. They made me angry. They made me do it. They made me sin. It's always someone else's fault.

Last Saturday down near Middlesbrough there was a tragic incident. A tragic loss of life where seven people died in a car crash.

Because one car was being driven the wrong way up a lane in the motorway. Five were killed in one car and two policemen in another.

Since the crash it's been in the news that one of the family, they were blaming the police for it. It's their fault. Trying to pass the blame.

[21:29] Taking no responsibility that their son or family member was driving the wrong way up a dual carriageway. It's just inner nature.

Even when we are doing wrong and we know it, it's somebody else's fault. That's the kind of world in which we live in. That's the kind of nature that we have.

But when you look at this verse, verse 29, you see how it quotes those words, the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge.

But what it says at the beginning is key. In those days they shall no longer say. They shall no longer say. They are accepting responsibility.

Instead, it says in verse 30, but everyone shall die for his own sin. Each man who eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge. It's no longer passing the buck.

[22:34] It's no longer saying it's my father's fault or my forefather's fault. It's no longer society's fault or my upbringing's fault. I am taking responsibility.

What shall we say? Well, we have to come before God. Because when we see God and when we look to God and we see our sin, it gives us a new outlook.

And that's what we see the change that is going to come with the people here. They shall no longer say. They shall no longer blame. Instead, there's a sense of individual accountability and also corporate accountability here.

Where individuals will confess their sins. Where the community, the corporate nature of it, they will confess their sins together. You think of the words of Psalm 51 which we sung.

against thee, thee only have I sinned. In thy sight done this ill. There's an acknowledgement I'm not going to blame anybody anymore.

[23:40] It is me. Against thee, thee only have I sinned. The same in the Gospels as you look through them. In Luke 18 verse 13 those tax collectors standing afar off praying.

And what's he saying? He's saying, God be merciful to me, a sinner. Whereas the other one who's standing beside him and saying, I am glad I am not like that man.

I tithe, I do this, I do that. But no, the tax collector has the right attitude. God be merciful to me, a sinner.

What can we say? What can you say? God be merciful to me, a sinner. again, the prodigal son.

As the son comes to the father in verse 21, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.

What can we say? We have sinned against you.

[24:43] What can we say as we come to a communion? I have sinned against you. We have sinned against you.

We are not worthy to be called your son. We are not worthy to be called your daughter. What can we say? We can confess our sin.

We can acknowledge our sin before God. If you were at the induction in Graver last evening, and I know many of you were, one of the main comments, and I spoken to a few last night and today, was how powerful the singing was.

There was just a sense of, how do you describe it? A sense of awe in that worship. A corporate worship where the power of God's presence and the praising of his name was powerful.

God's And there is blessing. And at the reception last night, at the end, we sang Psalm 133. And again, it asks that question, where is blessing found?

[25:58] It's together such as brethren are in unity to dwell. And there is that question then, what can we say? We acknowledge our sins individually.

We acknowledge our corporate sins. And we seek that blessing as we confess our sin, to seek that unity and that blessing from God.

We confess. We repent. That is what the people are looking for here. That's what God is looking for from the people here, that they would return to him.

That they would confess their sins. The shorter catechism again says about repentance unto life. It is a saving grace whereby a sinner out of a true sense of his sin and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ doth with grief and hatred of his sin turn from it unto God with full purpose of an endeavour after new obedience.

The very thing that we are seeing in these words. No longer will we say it's somebody else's fault but we will repent. We will turn from our sin.

[27:14] We will turn to God and endeavour after new obedience. confess we confess our sins. What shall we say? Father I have sinned against you.

Confess our sin. The fourth thing and final thing we see here is what will I know? Who can save we've asked the Lord?

Where can we go to the Father? What can we say? I have sinned against you. Well where does that take us? Into verse 31 to 34.

Again we're just going to look at it very briefly this evening but we'll come back to it again. Verse 31 says Behold the days are coming declares the Lord when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

And he speaks! then into their heart. Where he will put the law into their heart. He will write it on their hearts it says at the end of verse 33.

[28:26] And then in verse 34 No longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother saying know the Lord for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest declares the Lord for I will forgive!

where does this take us? It takes us to the place we will remember this Sunday to Calvary to the place of the cross.

The people here were struggling to find a way to forgiveness. And for many it would have been a sense of the law trying to keep the law perfectly.

But this new covenant that he's given to them is going to be written in their hearts where there will be a new sense of obedience.

Not able to keep the law perfectly because none are. And in order to forgive their sins as you go through the Old Testament they were having to offer their sacrifices daily weekly and then annually where they had the Passover meal offering up that scapegoat it was a continual way of sacrifice in order for their sins to be forgiven this was ongoing but where is it taking us it is taking us to the cross and where it declares I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more it is dealt with so they were struggling to find a way and so do we perhaps you are struggling with your sin tonight can he really forgive my sin well here we are reminded that he can when he writes his law on our heart he says

[30:31] I will remember your sin no more you are forgiven your debt is paid the lord has saved you in verse 31 it speaks of a new covenant and it links us into the new testament to what Jesus has done for us when you look at Luke 22 verse 20 and likewise the cup after they had eaten saying this cup that is poured out for you is a new covenant in my blood there is where we find forgiveness through faith in the lord Jesus Christ then you have Hebrews 8 where it speaks of Jesus as our great high priest bearing our sin quoting these very words from Jeremiah 31 again we'll come back to look at it in more detail but they are wonderful words what will you know as you come to him I will remember your sins no more in John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress there we meet the man called Christian man who's carrying a heavy burden!

on his back he doesn't understand what it is at first but he knows it's weighing him down and no matter what he does where he goes this burden follows him it is the weight of sin his guilt his past his shame all of these things but Christian begins this journey he climbs hills he faces enemies comes against temptation all of these things and the burden remains until he reaches a hill with a cross at the top and that's when everything changes because there as he approaches the cross the straps break the burden falls off rolls down the hill into an empty tomb and there he knows that he is free he is forgiven his sin has been taken from him and that is the joy of the Christian that is the joy that we see as we look to the Lord Jesus Christ as we think of all of these questions that we have where can we go what can we say what can I do we have so many questions but when we see the answer is in Christ it leads us to this point where we see I will remember your sins no more what would you say if the Lord returns tonight and you have to stand before how do you justify yourself is it what you have done is it the good things or is it by faith by believing by repenting by trusting and saying I have sinned against you but I have believed I have trusted that you are able to forgive my sins well don't just think about it in light of what the Lord returns but think about it in light of even coming to the Lord's table how are you coming in your strength in what you have done or remembering that it is through him sin is too strong for us to conquer but we have been ransomed we have been redeemed by the Saviour who is Jesus Christ and as we look to him and as we trust in him he says I will remember your sin no more and if you are trusting you are to come can you say he is my Saviour and my Lord if you can you confess your sin and he is faithful he is just to forgive and remember them no more and we can come and remember it is through him who gave his life as a ransom for many let us pray Lord our gracious God we thank you that your word guides us so often as we see in Jeremiah it gives us choices and we acknowledge so often we have made the wrong choice you have shown us the paths of life you have shown us a way to rest and yet we have gone our own ways we have gone into the far off land into the wilderness but we thank you Lord that you remember us that you gave grace even in the wilderness and as you have brought us back as you have helped us to return to you we thank you that you have shown us all that we need the things that we could never do for ourselves you have done you have ransomed us you have redeemed us you have kept!

us you have shown us the way you have shown us the life that is found in your son the Lord Jesus Christ you have shown us the way to confess our sins to turn from them and to know that great promise I will remember your sin no more so lord may you help us may you guide us may you bless us as we remember all of these things and as we remember what has been done for us we ask it all in his precious name amen we're going to conclude by singing to God's praise in psalm 32 the sing psalms version find it on page 38 psalm 32 page 38 we're going to sing from verse 1 to verse 5 the tune is Arlington how blessed the one who has received forgiveness for his sin whose sins are covered from

God's face whose debt is cancelled in God's grace there's no deceit in him we'll sing from verse 1 to 5 to God's praise how bless the one who has!

[37 : 29] forgiveness for our sins whose sins are covered from God's case whose debt is canceled in God's case love saved in him when I get silent on my woods with rolling where for light beneath your heart I felt and trapped!

O day and night my strength was stopped as in a summer dry summer dry when I laid bare my sin to you the guilt that did will be I said O Lord I have transgressed and you forgave when I profess you pardon from my sin Now may grace mercy and peace from God Father Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide all now forever Amen