

Still Not Saved

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[0 : 00] Well, would you turn with me this evening to the book of the prophet Jeremiah, and this time if we read a chapter 8.

Jeremiah chapter 8, that's page 771 in the Pew Bible. Jeremiah chapter 8, and if we just pick up our reading at verse 18.

Amen. My joy is gone, grief is upon me, my heart is sick within me. Behold the cry of the daughter of my people from the length and breadth of the land.

Is the Lord not in Zion? Is her King not in her? Why have they provoked me to anger with their carved images and with their foreign idols? The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.

For the wound of the daughter of my people is my heart wounded. I mourn and dismay has taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?

[1 : 09] Why then is the health of the daughter of my people not been restored? But particularly the words of verse 20, where it says, the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.

It's that time of year again, and God willing, next week will be harvest Thanksgiving. And to mark such an occasion, and to emphasize the need to give thanks to the Lord for all his gifts to us, as a congregation and as a community, we'll be having a harvest Thanksgiving service.

That's our usual practice, in which our presbytery appoints the annual date on which our harvest Thanksgiving service is to take place. And this year, our harvest Thanksgiving service will be held on Thursday the 23rd of November.

But you know, every year when it comes round to the time of harvest Thanksgiving, I'm always brought back to the preaching of this young man called Jeremiah.

And I'm reminded that although there is so much to thank the Lord for, and in the way of all the benefits and blessings that he bestows upon us, I'm always brought back to these words that describe so many people in our congregation and in our community.

[2 : 44] The harvest is over. The harvest is past. The summer has ended. And we are not saved. The question I want to ask you this evening.

Can it be said of you, the harvest is over, and the summer has passed, and yet, you are not saved. Another year has passed.

Another harvest is over. Another summer has come and gone. And yet, and yet, you are not saved. And you know, Jeremiah said these words because the people he preached to week in and week out, year after year after year, the people he preached to, they had wasted their opportunities to repent and seek the Lord with all their heart.

Jeremiah continually preached to the Israelites that they needed to turn from their sin and turn back to the Lord, but they passed up their opportunities. And my friends, sometimes I worry that that's what you're like too.

You hear the call to come to Christ. You hear the call to repent of your sins and be converted. You sit under sermons week by week, year after year after year, and yet, you're still not saved.

[4 : 08] You know what you need to do. And yet, another year has passed. Another harvest is over. Another summer has come and gone. And yet, you are still not saved.

Still not saved. And I wonder tonight, will another opportunity for you to be saved, will it just come and go? Will it just be another wasted opportunity?

The harvest is past. The summer has ended. And you are not saved. And you know, this verse, it sums up the entire book of Jeremiah. Because when we come to the book of Jeremiah, the Israelites, they have had many opportunities to repent of their sins and turn to the Lord.

But each and every one of their opportunities, it became a missed opportunity. And Jeremiah, as he continues to preach to them, his message is the same message as all the prophets before him. Judgment is coming. A day of reckoning is coming, he says. You need to repent and turn to the Lord, because judgment is coming.

[5 : 17] That's what Jeremiah's message was. And so as we consider these verses within the context of the book, I'd like us just to see that there are three things here.

There's a worrying prospect, there's a weeping prophet, and there's a wonderful provision. A worrying prospect, a weeping prophet, and a wonderful provision.

So if we look first of all at a worrying, a worrying prospect. A worrying prospect. He says the harvest is past, the summer has ended, and we are not saved.

And you know, if there was ever a dark day in the life of the people of Israel, this was it. This was Israel's darkest hour.

But long before this dark day, the Lord had called the nation of Israel to be his people. And through Abraham, the Lord promised that he would be their God, and they would be his people.

[6 : 15] And that as his people, they were to worship the Lord, they were to honor the Lord, they were to serve the Lord all the days of their life. The Lord alone was to be their focus. He was to be their priority.

He was to be their first and only love. The Israelites were to be committed to the Lord, and follow in his ways, and live their lives glorifying and enjoying him. Because the Lord was the one who redeemed them.

That's why they were to follow him. He was the one who delivered them, and brought them up out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. And because of what the Lord had done for the Israelites, they were not to worship any other God.

They were not to bow down to any other idol, or serve them. No, they were to love the Lord their God, with all their heart, all their mind, all their soul, and all their strength.

But if you know the history of the Israelites, it's a history full of disobedience, and full of disappointment. Because the Israelites didn't obey the Lord, and they repeatedly did what was right in their own eyes.

[7 : 21] And as you would expect, when left to themselves, they began to worship other gods, and bow down to idols, and serve them. And this went on for decades. Because 40 years in the wilderness, it was overshadowed by disobedience.

The period of the judges, that was tainted by rebellion. And the era of the kings, it was tarnished by every succeeding king, being worse than the last. Each king was leading the people astray, and leading them away from worshipping the Lord, and turning to worship idols.

But you know, in order to combat all this disobedience, and rebellion from the Israelites, the Lord raised up prophets. And the Lord raised up prophets, to remind the Israelites, that if they refused to repent, and turn from their sin, and turn back to the Lord, the Lord was going to bring judgment.

The Lord was going to take them out of Israel, and send them into Babylon. That's what the judgment was going to be. And as the prophets came, their role was to proclaim God's truth.

They were to herald God's covenant. They were to challenge any who worshipped false gods, or bowed down to idols. The prophets were to call the people, to realize the error of their ways, and to repent, and turn to the Lord, and seek Him with all their heart.

[8 : 44] But when you look at the history of the Israelites, it didn't matter how many prophets the Lord sent. It didn't matter how many prophets proclaimed His message.

It didn't matter how many opportunities, the people were given to repent. They weren't listening.

They were ignoring all the warnings of God's judgment. They were putting all the warnings of God's judgment, to the back of their minds, and just carrying on with life, just the way they wanted to.

They thought that they would be okay in the end. They passed up all these opportunities of repentance. And you know, the same is true today. Because like it was for the Israelites with the prophets, the Lord has sent many preachers to this pulpit, down throughout the years.

And like the prophets, they have proclaimed God's truth. They have heralded God's covenant. They have challenged you as to where you stand in relation to Jesus Christ.

And they have reminded you again and again and again, that the end is coming. You'll have to stand before God one day. There's a day coming when you'll be called to the bar of God's judgment, to give an account.

[10:01] And so you need to repent of your sins and turn to the Lord. Many preachers have reminded you to seek the Lord while he's to be found, and call upon him while he is near.

And that you need to commit your life to loving and following and worshipping the Lord. But it seems that despite all you're told, and despite the fact that you're pleaded with, you refuse to listen. You choose to ignore what's said. You willingly pass up your opportunities to be saved. Despite everything you've heard throughout your life, you're still going headlong towards a lost eternity in hell.

My friend, why are you wasting your life chasing the things that will not last? Why are you trying to hold on to the things that will only be taken from you?

Why are you clinging to things that will never satisfy you? Why are you willfully rejecting the Lord as your savior? Why are you letting all these opportunities just pass you by?

[11:13] Because what's so sad? What's so sad is that the harvest is over. The summer has passed. And you are still not saved.

And you know, Jeremiah, he uses this agricultural imagery, and this agricultural illustration, in order to emphasize this window of opportunity. Because as you know, the summer, it's a busy time of year for a farmer.

It's a busy time of year because, well, it's during the warmer weather, as you know yourselves, the warmer weather and the longer days, that's when the farmer makes use of his window of opportunity.

He makes use of planting and sowing and fertilizing and cultivating and watering and growing and growing all the vegetation. The summer is the window of opportunity to be busy preparing for the harvest.

Because when the summer is over, the weather cools and the days become shorter. And then the harvest comes. And when the harvest comes, it's another busy season, cutting and gathering and storing and transporting and selling.

[12:24] The harvest is a busy season of opportunity. And the harvest is always in preparation for the winter. And you know, we have to see that the seasons of summer and harvest, they're all about preparing for the winter.

The seasons of summer and harvest are about preparing for the winter. Was it not Solomon who said, to everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven.

And what Solomon was saying there in Ecclesiastes 3 was that there are times and seasons in our lives. There is a time to be born and a time to die.

Our lives are like the four seasons. And if you'll let me make this personal to you. In your life, the season of spring was when you were young.

Everything was new. You were growing. You were full of life, full of energy, full of vitality. But as you grew older, the season changed to summer. And during the summer, the summer of your life, you could say that, well, you reached the pinnacle of your life.

[13:42] Where in your 20s and 30s and 40s, like the farmer, it was a busy time in your life because you're settling down, you're putting down roots, you're preparing for the harvest. And it doesn't take long, does it, for the harvest to come round.

A few short years and the season in your life changes again. Because as we know, autumn is a season which is full of change. The strength of summer is gone and everything is slowly changing. The leaves on the trees, they're changing colour. And that's what happens in the autumn of our own lives. You change. You grow older. You move towards retirement.

You become weaker and slower. You're not as fit as you used to be. Everything is changing in the season of your life.

And everything is preparing for winter. And like it is just now with the cold, long, dark nights of winter that have come upon us, they've come upon us so suddenly without even realising it.

[14:49] The seasons have changed so quickly that we didn't even have time to prepare for it properly. And that's what it can be like with the seasons of our life. They can change so quickly that they can move from summer to autumn to winter in what seems to be just this short space of time.

And when the winter comes, the cold reality of death hits. Because in the winter of your life, you can count more of your friends among the dead than among the living.

And you know, it's no wonder Solomon said, to everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die.

In those words, he brings us through the four seasons of our life. And my friend, the seasons of our lives, they are changing and there's nothing we can do to stop it. And you know, I look at some of you and Jeremiah is speaking to you about the season of your life.

And he's saying to you, the harvest is over. The summer has passed. And you are still not saved.

[16:11] You are now in the winter of your life. And the reality is, you have wasted the opportunities that you were given in your spring, in your summer, and in your autumn.

You are in the winter of your life. But Jeremiah's plea to you and my plea to you is that you don't waste the few opportunities that are provided for you in the winter of your life.

Because it's a worrying prospect to waste the opportunities we are given and face the cold, long, dark night of winter.

And it's because of this worrying prospect that we see, secondly, a weeping prophet. A worrying prospect and a weeping prophet.

Look again at verse 20. He says, The harvest is past, the summer has ended, and we are not saved. For the wound of the daughter of my people is my heart wounded. I mourn and dismay has taken hold on me.

[17:18] Now we mentioned earlier that the history of the Israelites was tainted and tarnished by disobedience and rebellion. And that was because for centuries there was this constant cycle of rebellion and then restoration.

Rebellion and restoration. Where the Israelites, they would rebel, they would turn away from the Lord, they would turn to their idols and bow down to them. But as we said, in order to combat all this disobedience and this rebellion against the Lord, the Lord raised up prophets.

He raised them up to remind the Israelites that they were to only serve the living and through God. And out of His grace and His love and His mercy, the Lord sent prophet after prophet after prophet to warn the people.

And they were to warn them that if they refused to repent and turn from their sin and turn back to the Lord, the Lord would bring judgment. And the message that the prophets preached again and again and again was the solemn message.

Judgment is coming. You need to repent because judgment is coming. And as we said, that was the role of the prophets. They were to proclaim God's truth. The role of the prophets was to call the people to realize the error of their ways and repent and turn to the Lord and seek Him with all their heart.

[18:37] But as we said, it didn't matter how many prophets the Lord sent. It didn't matter how many prophets proclaimed His message. They weren't listening. But then the Lord raises up one final prophet.

This young man called Jeremiah. And as we read in chapter 1, Jeremiah knew that he was young. He knew that he was inexperienced.

He felt in that sense he was immature to be a prophet to the nations. But the Lord reminded Jeremiah like Paul reminded Timothy, let no one despise you for your youth.

And the Lord spoke to young Jeremiah and said to him, before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. And before you were born, I consecrated you and I have appointed you to be a prophet to the nations.

And the Lord said to him, do not say I am only a youth for wherever I send you you shall go and whatever I command you you shall speak.

[19:41] Do not be afraid of them for I am with you to deliver you declares the Lord. And then we're told that the Lord put his hand on Jeremiah's mouth and said, behold I have put my words in your mouth.

Jeremiah may have been a young prophet but he was the Lord's prophet. He was the Lord's anointed. And the Lord called him and appointed him as the prophet to the nations.

Jeremiah was to be God's spokesman and he was to proclaim whatever God wanted him to say.

And from the outset of his ministry Jeremiah was told that his ministry and his message it was going to be the same message as all the other prophets.

The message wasn't going to change just because he was a young prophet. The message wasn't going to be watered down and diluted just because he was an inexperienced preacher.

No, the message was going to remain the same. Judgment is coming. You need to repent because judgment is coming. But even though Jeremiah was a young and inexperienced prophet he took his

calling very seriously.

[20 : 54] And he took his calling seriously because he knew that the message he had to preach was of the utmost importance. Because it was a message of life or death blessing or cursing being saved or being lost it was all about salvation or judgment heaven or hell.

And it's because Jeremiah felt the burden of the message he had to preach that he often preached with tears. Jeremiah is known to us as the weeping prophet because he often wept over the state of his nation and the hardness of people's hearts.

That's why Jeremiah wrote the book of Lamentations. He was lamenting and weeping and mourning over the spiritual state of his nation. But you know when you read the book of Jeremiah you learn that he was gentle in nature you learn that he was this tender man who had tender feelings towards his people and he was deeply compassionate.

He had so much passion in what he was preaching about and even though he had to pronounce such strong warnings to the Israelites for their disobedience he loved them.

He loved them. My friend Jeremiah preached a message of God's judgment and he preached with tears because he loved the people he was preaching to. And you know I believe that every preacher and every Christian should be more like Jeremiah.

[22 : 30] I wish I was more like Jeremiah because when Jeremiah thought about the worrying prospect for the Israelites he became a weeping prophet.

When Jeremiah considered the reality of God's wrath and judgment being poured upon unrepentant sinners he wept. When Jeremiah experienced the weight and burden of the people to whom he was called to preach his eyes filled with tears.

When Jeremiah looked into the eyes of his people and preached to them with so much passion tears ran down his face. But this wasn't emotionalism. This wasn't play acting in order to pull on the heartstrings of people.

This was a genuine concern for their soul. Because when Jeremiah looked at his congregation he knew that they were now in the winter of their opportunity.

He knew that the harvest had passed and the summer was ended and they were still not saved. And now in the winter of opportunity Jeremiah knew that they wouldn't have many more opportunities.

[23 : 41] Their opportunities were running thin. And Jeremiah is weeping before them and he's pleading with them and he says to them in verse 21 that his burden for them is so heavy that his heart is wounded and he's mourning over the people.

He's dismayed and he's distressed that they have refused to lay hold of their opportunities to repent and seek the Lord. My friend Jeremiah had a genuine concern for the souls of those who listened to his preaching.

And you know although I don't feel entitled to say I'm anything like Jeremiah I can say that I have a genuine concern for your soul and your eternal well-being.

And I have a concern because I realise the seriousness of passing up the opportunity to come to Christ for your salvation. And when I look at you in the season of your life the season that you're in now I think how can you pass up another opportunity to repent of your sin and seek the Lord with all your heart?

How can you put off coming to Jesus Christ for your salvation? And this is the burden I have as someone who preaches to you week by week month by month year by year because I know that this message is a message of life or death blessing or cursing saved or lost salvation or judgment heaven or hell.

[25 : 23] I know the seriousness of this message and I know that in the season of your life the harvest has passed the summer has ascended and you are still still not saved.

Still not saved. But like it was for Jeremiah my love for you my burden for you my concern for your soul do you know my friend that will never save you.

My burden my love my concern it will never save your soul. I can preach to you week in week out but it will never save your soul.

I wish I could save you. I wish I could save you. I wish I could bring you into the kingdom myself. I wish I could go into every home and every family in this community and save them but I can't.

I can't do it. My friend you have to be concerned for your own soul and you have to seek the Lord with all your heart. You have to cry out to the Lord for mercy.

[26 : 34] You have to commit your life to Jesus Christ. You have to go down and bend a knee. I can't do it for you. I can't do it for you. I wish I could but I can't.

And you know for a preacher that's what hurts the most. When someone rejects the gospel that's what leaves the preacher like Jeremiah with a wounded heart dismayed and distressed that people refuse to lay hold of their opportunities and repent and seek the Lord.

And you know there were many preachers throughout the centuries who have preached and pleaded for people to be saved. The English evangelist in the 18th century George Whitefield he was often moved to tears when he preached to his people.

It said that his sermons were so sincere and they were filled with such love and compassion towards his congregation that tears streamed down his face. But you know our greatest example of a preacher who preached with love and compassion and warmth towards lost sinners.

It was Jesus himself. If you remember Jesus he wept over the city of Jerusalem. And he wept because they refused to listen to the message of the prophets.

[28 : 02] And Jesus said oh Jerusalem Jerusalem the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it. How often I would have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and yet you would not.

Jesus wept not out of acting or emotionalism or as an imposter. Jesus wept like Jeremiah out of genuine concern for lost souls.

And you know what's interesting about all this is that there were imposters who were preaching to the people. At that time and in Jesus' day and even in our day there are many preachers who preach a false gospel.

There are many preachers who don't preach with the authoritative stamp thus saith the Lord. And Jeremiah he highlights this to us back in verse 11 of this chapter.

What he says about false prophets. They have healed the wound of my people lightly saying peace peace when there is no peace. in contrast to Jeremiah's message of coming judgment the false prophets were saying everything will be okay.

[29 : 24] They were saying and giving this the people false hope. They were preaching peace peace when there wasn't any peace. The false prophets were saying to the people you don't need to repent.

You don't need to worry. You don't need to turn to the Lord. You don't need to be thinking about the winter of your life. death. This is indulgent because judgment will not be as bad as Jeremiah's making it out to be.

It's not really that important. And you know that's what the devil and all the false prophets of this world will tell you.

It's not really that important. But you know my friend I take no delight in talking about death. I don't enjoy speaking about judgment that is coming.

I don't like telling anyone that without Christ they're going to hell. But the only reason I do it is out of concern, out of love, out of a desire to see you saved.

[30 : 32] I mean would you rather I told you a lie? Would you rather I softened the message for you? Would you rather I told you that your soul isn't really that important?

Of course you wouldn't. Surely you want me to tell you the truth. Surely you want me to emphasize your need to seek the Lord while he's to be found.

Surely you want me to plead with you and encourage you and challenge you as to where you are in relation to Jesus Christ because you know that before the winter of your life comes to an end.

You need Jesus as your Lord and as your Savior. You know that you need him. Just don't pass up this opportunity to make him your Lord and Savior.

and this is why I want us to consider lastly a wonderful provision. We've considered a worrying prospect that the people were wasting their opportunities.

[31 : 43] We've considered a weeping prophet who pleaded with the people not to waste their opportunities. But lastly because of a worrying prospect and a weeping prophet, Jeremiah presents to the people a wonderful provision.

A wonderful provision. Read again at verse 20. The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved. For the wound of the daughter of my people is my heart wounded.

I mourn and dismay has taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of the daughter of my people not been restored?

And in these closing verses, one of the closing verse, verse 22, Jeremiah, he asks this rhetorical question. Is there no balm in Gilead?

Is there no physician there? And Jeremiah's purpose in asking such a rhetorical question is of course to emphasize that there is balm in Gilead and there is a physician there.

[32 : 47] There's opportunity for redemption and restoration, he's saying. There's opportunity for help and healing. But for so long the false prophets, they've been feeding the people this lie that there's no need for the balm.

There's no need for the physician. There's no point in seeking these things and they're trying to just ignore the disease and cover over all the wounds that are on the people.

But as time was going on, the harvest has passed, the summer has ended, and the wounds of the people are still festering. The disease is still deadly. And Jeremiah says to the people, is there no balm in Gilead?

Is there no physician there? He reminds them of the wonderful provision of salvation that the Lord has made for his people. Because the balm which came from Gilead, it was the best and most valuable balm which money could buy.

And until the people sought out that balm from Gilead, they would never receive the correct treatment from the great physician. and they would never be restored.

[33 : 55] And you know, the same is true for you, my friend. Because this world will feed you the lie, the lie of the false prophets that your condition is not as bad as the Bible says.

The world will tell you that you have no need of a physician. But the truth is, your sin is a deadly disease. And it's causing wounds that are deep and festering.

And there's no doubt that this disease of sin is going to bring you through all the seasons of your life to the cold, dark night of winter.

And you've seen it before with others. Those who used to sit here but are no longer with us. They reached their winter and they passed into eternity.

eternity. You've seen it before. The wages of sin is death. But, the best but in the Bible, the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ.

[35 : 08] My friend, there is Bam and Gilead and there is a physician there because God has made a wonderful provision in the person of Jesus Christ. And he says to us tonight in the gospel, those who are well have no need of a physician but those who are sick.

I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. And what Jesus means there is that the qualification for coming to this physician, it's not are you good enough?

The qualification for coming to Jesus for salvation is, are you bad enough? Do you see your sin and do you see your need of a savior?

Do you see your ruin and your need of the remedy? Do you see your problem and your need of the prescription? Do you see it? Do you see your sin and your need of this savior?

Well, my friend, Jeremiah is reminding us this evening that the provision that has been made for you is a wonderful provision. It's a wonderful provision.

[36 : 20] Salvation in Jesus Christ, saved from the wrath to come, saved from your sin, cleansed all the way through, created within you a clean heart.

This is the wonderful provision that the gospel offers. God, and you have another opportunity to receive this provision by trusting in Jesus Christ as your savior and committing your life to him.

Who knows if you'll get another opportunity? Who knows? God, you're saved. But there's one thing for sure, that for many of you in here, the harvest has passed, the summer has ended, and you are still not saved.

My friend, you need to be saved. You need to make the most of your opportunities. you need to seek the Lord.

Please, please, please, don't waste your opportunities. And you know I have no doubt that these words, the harvest has passed, the summer has ended, and we are not saved.

[37 : 53] they will haunt you in hell if you do not respond to what the Lord is saying to you. My friend, this is so serious, and it is so urgent.

Do not put it off. Seek the Lord while he's to be found. Call upon him while he is near.

May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we pray, Lord, that thy word would find lodgment in our heart, that that seed would be sown, that we would know the promise of what the psalmist was saying, that that man who bearing precious seed, in going forth

doth mourn, he doubtless bringing back his sheaves, rejoicing, shall return, and Lord, we pray that the seed which is sown, O Lord, that it may bring forth fruit to thine own glory, that those in the hearing would not waste their opportunities, but seek thee while thou art to be found, and call upon thee while thou art near.

O Lord, keep us on mercy's ground until we find thee. Go before us in the week that lies ahead, and do us good, for we ask it in Jesus' name, and for his sake.

Amen. We shall conclude by singing the words of Psalm 40. Psalm 40, page 259.

[39 : 43] This is the testimony of everyone who is saved, everyone who trusts in the Lord.

They can say, He took me from a fearful pit, and from the miry clay, and on a rock he set my feet, establishing my way. He put a new song in my mouth, our God to magnify.

Many shall see it and shall fear, and on the Lord rely. this is the testimony of those who are saved.

My longing is that this will be your testimony.

We shall conclude by singing Psalm 40, verses 1 to 4, to God's praise. Amen. I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did there, and I knew he did it by my voice and cry to hear.

He took me from a fearful pit and from the mighty clay and on our own he set my feet establishing I way.

[41 : 38] He put a new song in my mouth, a call to magnify.

Many shall see, and thou shalt fear, and on the Lord rely.

O blessed is the man whose trust upon the Lord relies, respecting not the proud nor such, and turn aside to lies.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.