

# Jeremiah 8

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[ 0 : 00 ] I want to look with you for a little while this evening at three solemn questions requiring serious consideration.

Three solemn questions which you will find posed in the 22nd verse of the 8th chapter of the book of Jeremiah the prophet.

These are the questions. Is there no Bam and Gilead? Is there no physician there?

Why then is there no healing for the wound of my people? Well, three solemn questions regarding serious consideration on your part and on mine.

Why then? Is there no Bam and Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is there no healing for the wound of my people?

[ 1 : 20 ] Well, God is threatening the destruction of a sinful nation. He has been patient with them, but because of their persistent sinning, it seems that his patience is wearing thin.

And it seems that he can no longer stay his hand in judgment. The hour of the revelation of his displeasure upon a sinful people is at hand.

According to the record here before us, the judgment that God was about to send upon them would come, first of all, by means of an invading army.

An army that would deprive the people of most of their material comforts. And secondly, Jeremiah reminds us here, the nation would face all manner of calamities.

Dreadful things would be experienced by the inhabitants. For example, their fields would be ruined, their cities would be destroyed, and the people would either be slain or taken away into captivity.

[ 2 : 49 ] Verse 13 reminds us, I will surely consume them, says the Lord. There shall be no grapes on the vine or figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade.

And the things that I have given them shall pass away from them. And further, at the 17th verse we read, For behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices among you, which will not be charmed, and they shall bite you.

Now, at such a prospect, the hearts of the people were sinking into despair. They knew that God was angry with them, and they knew that the reason for his anger was because of the sin of which they had been guilty.

They say, The Lord our God has put us to silence and given us water of gall to drink. Why?

Because we have sinned against the Lord.

And they also knew that the army by which God was about to execute his promised judgment was an army that would be far too strong for them ever to hope to ever overcome.

[ 4 : 03 ] They could not resist it. How could they? There was little hope of doing that.

Now, as he becomes more and more aware of the gravity of the situation, we find the prophet Jeremiah crying out almost in desperation, Is there no Bamingaliant?

Is there no physician there? Why then? Is there no healing for the wounds of my people?

Now, although these words, my friends, were primarily addressed to Israel, and they were addressed to Israel in days in which they were in a spiritual state of decline, they nonetheless are important for us to consider here this evening.

This is one of the wonders of Holy Scripture, is it not? Although they were written centuries ago, yet they are relevant. They still speak to conditions that you and I are facing, not just as a nation, but facing as individuals in these days in which we live.

[ 5 : 20 ] Well, let us first of all consider tonight the disease that mars. The disease that mars. The prophet asks, Is there no balm in Gilead?

And the reason behind the question was the disease that mars. It was the sin of the people. Now, sin, according to the clear teaching of Holy Scripture, is a deadly plague, and its destructive powers

are at work in the hearts of all men.

Isaiah the prophet says this, he says, The whole heart, the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores.

They have been closed. They have not been closed nor bound up, neither mollified with ointment. This was the condition that was prevailing in the days of Isaiah the prophet, and this was the condition that was prevailing in the days of Jeremiah.

And, my friends, this is the condition that's prevailing in this day and generation in which you and I live too. Mankind is, as it were, diseased from head to foot, spiritually, by the accursed sickness of sin.

[ 6 : 50 ] And the Bible tells us that there is none who are righteous, no, not one, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The disease of sin, that terrible disease, that accursed disease, affects us all.

Now, the tragedy was this, that the false prophets were minimizing the evil of sin. They were there with their remedy. They were making suggestions, but the remedy that they were suggesting, the people apply to their lives and to their conditions, were remedies that were inadequate.

They could not, indeed, address the problem that prevailed at that time. They healed the wounds superficially, saying, peace, peace, when there is no peace.

You see, the people were out of touch with God. They were living in disobedience to God. And the false prophets, it seems, had made a false diagnosis and prescribed the wrong remedy.

And the wounds of the nation were still infected. In other words, their spiritual condition was still unimproved. And, of course, the disease that mars, the disease of sin, is a sin that's universal, a condition that, as I say, still affects the whole of mankind today.

[ 8 : 17 ] We are born in sin and shaped in iniquity. And as I have already quoted from the Apostle Paul, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

There is not one righteous, no, not one. The sin that mars. A universal problem, yes, but a personal problem too. That leads us on, secondly, to consider the balm which soothes.

Is there no balm in Gilead? Now, Gilead's balm, it appears, was derived from a special tree. There was only one tree that had the healing qualities.

There was nothing particularly attractive about this tree. There was no special grandeur. There was no special beauty belonging to it. But it was something that was needed.

It was something that could help. And in order to obtain the healing essence which the tree contained, the tree had to be wounded, or to put it in another way, it had to be bled.

[ 9 : 31 ] And the sap derived from it. There was balm in Gilead. Not just for the physical healing of the people, but there was balm in Gilead for the spiritual well-being of the people too.

There was a cure for both the moral and spiritual hurt of the people. You see, they had at that time amongst themselves the law and the prophets.

The law and the prophets with whose help they might have been brought to a place of repentance. They had the princes, they had the priests whose job it was to reform the nation.

The remedy was there, all right, but the problem was this. The people were failing to apply the remedy to their own condition. God had made the provision to redress all of their grievances, to heal all of their diseases.

There was a cure for their problem, for their spiritual hurt, but they were failing to apply it. And I venture to suggest this evening that there is still a remedy for the hurt of sinful humanity.

[ 10 : 47 ] There is still provision to be found in the grace of God and in the gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. You see, the gospel centers upon a person.

It centers upon God's Son. It centers upon Christ who came to seek and to save those who were lost. There is a remedy tonight for sin. And you know, it grieves me when I listen to many of our politicians in this day and age and those who claim to possess certain knowledge on certain subjects trying to convince us that if the problems caused by sin in our society today are going to be cured, so to speak, then we've got to go down a certain road.

We've got to take certain action. For example, our government is chasing its tail trying to find a solution for the problem of teenage alcoholism, binge drinking.

And some time ago, some so-called wise individuals came up with the solution that in order to combat the problem, we needed to extend the licensing hours, give the people more time to drink

and that would be the end of the matter.

Ah, no, they're still chasing their tails. They're still looking for a solution to the problem because, you see, extending the licensing hours hasn't altered anything, so to speak.

[ 12 : 34 ] And we hear them crying out about the problem of teenage pregnancies and so on it goes. Oh, educate, educate, educate. My friends, how many thousands upon thousands upon thousands of pounds have been spent on education?

Has the problem gone away? no, it seems it's still increasing and it will continue to increase because there is only one solution, there is only one remedy to the problems that are caused in society and in the individual heart by sin and that remedy is to be found in Jesus Christ.

He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God through him.

And it was for the purpose of setting men and women and young people free from the blight and curse and condemnation and power of sin that two thousand years ago Jesus Christ left for a while his honored position there in glory, took upon himself the form of man, came down to a world that was cursed by sin and went all the way to Calvary where bearing in his own body on that accursed tree he died in the room instead of those whom he loved and had loved from all eternity and those whom he desired to save and my friend there is none other save the Lord Jesus Christ who can break the power of sin in the heart and life of the individual.

Oh I pray I earnestly pray that the eyes of our government of our leaders of those in the so called in the know today might be open to the reality of the situation and to see that the solution to the problems of mankind the solution to the problems of our society today is to be found not in education not in some of the harebrained schemes that are being put forth to try and convince us no my friends the answer lies in Jesus Christ and in him alone able to save yes able to save to the uttermost is there no balm and gilliam is there no cure tonight for the soul that's sick with sin is there no hope of release or promise of deliverance for those who are bound and fettered by Satan and sin I am glad tonight there is I am glad tonight there is balm and gilliam there is provision that God has made in his son

[ 15 : 19 ] Jesus Christ the one who is freely proclaimed to us in the gospel but the tragedy is this that just as in the case of those to whom God's servant Jeremiah was addressing all those many generations ago so today men and women and young people are failing to apply the remedy to their own hearts God has made provision Jesus Christ is able to save and he died for this very purpose of bringing deliverance to souls that were in bondage there was balm and gilliam there was balm in gilliam thirdly

I want us to look at the physician who heals is there no balm in gilliam yes there certainly is have you made that discovery I wonder is there no physician there there certainly is you know there are times when you and I may feel a little bit under the weather physically and we go along to the doctor and we sit there in the surgery and we pour out all of our troubles into the sympathetic ear of our physician we tell the doctor what's wrong with us well doctor it's like this

I've been bothered with a bit of a pain in my back for several days or I've got some discomfort in my chest or my blood pressure seems to be high and so on it goes and then the doctor will start to carry out an examination of the patient in other words he won't just take your word and mine for it and in carrying out that examination he uses certain instruments he may use a stethoscope he may use a thermometer well I'm not a medical man tonight and I can't name all the various instruments that the doctor uses but normally he carries out a thorough examination of the patient using those instruments to help him and then he sends the patient home is that what happens no it's not having carried out an examination of the patient he then goes on to diagnose the disease in other words to tell us what's wrong with us what he has found out as a result of his examination of us end of the story no normally he then goes on to prescribe the cure he writes out a prescription for a bottle of medicine or a course of pills and tells us that if taken faithfully for a period of time the problem should leave us healing will take place sometimes of course it takes more than a bottle of medicine or a bottle of pills sometimes he has to send us along to see a specialist and the specialist carries out a further examination and then he suggests surgery should take place and if you and I have ever gone undergone surgery at any point in the past we know that it's never a pleasant experience for anyone to go through it can be a painful experience a distressing experience but surely we're wise enough to know that it's a necessary experience if we're going to enjoy a measure of health and strength again the physician plays a very important part in the physical healing of your body and mine now my friends

God has a physician the Holy Spirit the third person of the Trinity and there is a sense in which he works in a similar fashion to the doctor with whom we are so familiar he carries out an examination of the human heart the instrument that God uses or God the Holy Spirit uses principally is his word although not exclusively but principally his word and having carried out the examination he then goes on to diagnose the disease in other words to convince us that we're sick spiritually that we have a problem that this accursed disease is rife in our souls it's never a pleasant experience when the

Holy Spirit is at work probing deep down into the innermost dark recesses of our soul revealing to us the true nature of our hearts convincing us that we're sinners in need of a saviour some people when under the probing fingers of the Holy Spirit can lose sleep can even be put off their food can find themselves in great distress of soul for days for weeks for months I even hear never a pleasant experience but oh it's a necessary experience if we're ever going to enjoy the blessings of spiritual health once more I often think of that wonderful story I'm sure many of you are familiar with it the story of

[ 22 : 26 ] Michael Kate of Lough Karen a wicked woman if ever there was one a woman who refused to listen to the pleadings of her pastor and yet that wise pastor that godly man used means that perhaps to us today may be somewhat unorthodox but he sat down and he wrote a song in which he enumerated all of Kate's known sins and he got someone to set it to music and arrange for it to be sung at a Kelly at which he knew Kate would be present and so the song was sung and it seems that the Holy Spirit of God took the words of that song and drove home to the heart of this aged sinner the gravity of her spiritual condition she saw herself as she really was and for a long period of time she was under great distress of soul in fact the story records that she wept herself blind and it is said that the hills around

La Karen resounded to the deep anguished cries of that woman in whose heart the Holy Spirit of God was at work never a pleasant experience my friends but it's a necessary one and if I might venture to suggest to you tonight it's a very blessed experience because you see the Holy Spirit who reveals to us the depth of our depravity also goes on to reveal to us the cure the Lord Jesus Christ the one who is able to save and there was a blessed day came when Kate was mightily delivered when the grace of God was shed abroad in our heart and our life was transformed we talk of this work of the Holy

Spirit as the work of effectual calling the definition given in the shorter catechism is that effectual calling is a work of God's Spirit whereby convincing us of our sin and misery enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ and renewing our wills he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ who is freely offered to us in the gospel you see the divine physician does something that the ordinary physician doesn't do he convinces us yes of our need but he makes us willing to take as it were the cure very often the doctor will prescribe the cure he will write out the prescription but he doesn't make us take it the Holy

Spirit who convinces of sin and misery who enlightens the human mind in the knowledge of Christ who points as it were to Jesus God's remedy for sin so works in the heart of the individual he persuades as the catechism puts it and enables us to do what to embrace Jesus Christ who is freely offered to us in the gospel is there no balm in Gilead oh thank God there is tonight what a wonderful cure there is in Jesus have you discovered it is there no physician there nobody to convince me that I'm a sinner nobody to convince me that I need salvation nobody to convince me that Jesus

Christ is able to say ah yes there is the Holy Spirit and it may be it may be I say as you sit in church tonight you're conscious of the probing fingers of the Holy Spirit at work in your heart and life there he is through the instrumentality of his word convincing you of your sin and misery may he go on to enlighten you in the knowledge of Christ may he go on to renew your will may he go on to persuade and enable you to embrace Jesus Christ who is freely offered in the gospel maybe you've been conscious of the probing fingers of the

[ 28 : 14 ] Holy Spirit for a long time my friend resist no longer resist no longer I want us to look briefly in closing at the question that is posed here it really deals with a third of these serious questions regarding our consideration is there no balm in Gilead is there no physician there why then oh why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered why are the wounds not healed well it may be like those to whom Isaiah Jeremiah addressed those words all those many years ago the cure is there my friends you're conscious of your need of it but you're refusing to take

the steps under the guidance and leading of the Holy

Spirit to apply that cure to your sin sick soul we come across some very solemn words in this chapter these words the harvest is past the summer is ended and we are not saved solemn words and it may be for someone in this gathering tonight the summer is drawing to a close the summer of opportunity to close in with God's offer of mercy and forgiveness you know there are some of you sitting here under the sound of my voice tonight and listen it's not the first time you've heard the gospel some of you looking back can recall hearing it first at the knee of a praying mother or from the lips of a godly father some of you recall the instruction given and the exhortation given by a godly

Sunday school teacher telling you of Jesus and encouraging you to give your young heart to him some of you have been confronted again and again with the gospel as you've sat under the faithful ministry of God's word tonight you know you need to be saved and you know deep down in your heart that there is only one who can save you Jesus Christ God son and yet the sad truth of the matter is this you're still in your sins you're still unsaved you're still without Christ the harvest is past the summer is the day of opportunity is drawing to a close which of us know and you're still not saved oh as I draw this service to a close and I'm almost reluctant to do so because

I believe God is speaking to some but I must close and I must pronounce the benediction and you must go your several ways but if you're not Christ tonight then can I encourage you please not to let the matter rest if the physician of God the divine physician is working in your heart right now and he's convinced you of your sin and misery he's enlightened your mind in the way of knowledge of Christ he's shown you Christ as God's cure for your sin then pray to him and pray to him earnestly and keep on praying that he will continue the work that he will indeed persuade and enable you to embrace to trust to believe to come to the Lord

Jesus Christ who is freely offered to you in the gospel I may never preach to you again I don't know but if I never do I hope you'll remember the challenge of these three solemn questions is there no Bam and Gilead yes there is never forget that is there no physician there yes there is never forget that with the privilege there comes a responsibility why then are you not saved in the words of the prophet seek ye the Lord while he may be found call ye upon him while he is kneeled let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thought and let him return unto the

[ 34 : 35 ] Lord and he will have mercy upon him and to our God for he will abundantly part let us pray over his heart ab and