

Check Your Direction  
July 31, 2011  
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Jeremiah 31:27-34

What would you say to explain to a non-believing friend the difference it makes in your life to have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ?

As we saw last week, these people have been through a TERRIBLE ORDEAL because of their disobedience to God. But God has a PLAN...a plan for their GOOD and His Glory.

Jeremiah 31:27-28

27 "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will plant the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the offspring of men and of animals. 28 Just as I watched over them to uproot and tear down, and to overthrow, destroy and bring disaster, so I will watch over them to build and to plant," declares the LORD.

- We said last week: "Nothing comes into our lives that doesn't pass through God's hands."
- Why did God ALLOW the people of Judah to be taken into captivity for 70 years? Because of their disobedience.
- Any flower or vegetable gardeners here? What does it mean to TILL a patch of ground?
- How would we compare the metaphor of tilling a patch to what God allowed to happen to the people of Judah?
- God allowed them to be uprooted, torn down, as if tilling the soil and removing weeds.
- This was explained when Jeremiah received his calling. Look back at Jeremiah 1:10...someone read this.
- What comes after the tilling? Planting for new growth.
- Just as God promised to RESTORE the house of Israel and the house of Judah to the Promised Land...more importantly for YOU and me, He promised a coming Messiah who would bring NEW LIFE through a relationship with Jesus Christ.
- It's a PERSONAL relationship.
- What do we mean when we sometimes say "there are no 'grandchildren' of God only CHILDREN of God? You don't inherit salvation through parents.
- Therefore, we're all responsible for our own sin.
- Verse 29 uses an interesting proverb of his day to illustrate this:

Jeremiah 31:29-30

29 "In those days people will no longer say,

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

30 Instead, everyone will die for his own sin; whoever eats sour grapes—his own teeth will be set on edge.

- First, anyone want to take a shot at what is meant by "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"?
- This probably referred to what God said in Exodus 20:5b "I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me."

Holman Old Testament Commentary:

*The people were using their interpretation of this verse as an excuse for their sinful lifestyle. Their reasoning was, "Since we are victims of the system, we are not responsible for our sins." Jeremiah rejected this attitude.*

Ezekiel, another prophet from that time, spoke almost verbatim what Jeremiah said here (Ezekiel 18:1-4)

In Ezekiel 18:4... For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son—both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die.

- That last line is the point: "The soul who sins is the one who will die."
- We can't blame our sins on what our parents or grandparents did.
- Once we are mature enough to understand, we're EACH responsible for our own sin.
- Side note: I'm not saying that the CONSEQUENCES of the actions of a parent don't IMPACT their children for years to come...of course, that is true.
- However, when it comes to REPENTING and TURNING from SIN...it's an individual, personal TRANSACTION between ME and GOD.
- Now HERE'S THE GREAT NEWS! God was not only doing a NEW THING he was making a NEW COVENANT.

Jeremiah 31:31-33

31 "The time is coming," declares the LORD,  
"when I will make a new covenant  
with the house of Israel  
and with the house of Judah.

32 It will not be like the covenant  
I made with their forefathers  
when I took them by the hand  
to lead them out of Egypt,  
because they broke my covenant,  
though I was a husband to them,"  
declares the LORD.

33 "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel  
after that time," declares the LORD.

"I will put my law in their minds  
and write it on their hearts.

I will be their God,  
and they will be my people.

- A NEW and DIFFERENT covenant!
- God had made a number of covenants with His people...Noah...never destroy the earth by flood again; Abram I'll give your descendants the promised land; David ...his heir would be the Messiah.
- But verse 32 refers to the covenant made when God led the children of Israel out of Egypt. (Exodus 19:5-6)
- That He would make them a "kingdom of priests" if they would OBEY everything He said.
- So Moses goes up on Mount Sinai and comes down with what? Ten Commandments
- The LAW
- How did the people do obeying the LAW?
- Verse 32 uses a familiar metaphor, God says "I was their husband"...and they CHEATED on me.
- What do you think verse 33 means when it says "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts"?

The Life Application Study Bible says:

*God would write his law on their hearts rather than on tablets of stone. The change seems to describe an experience very much like the new birth...When we turn our lives over to God, he, by his Holy Spirit, builds into us the desire to obey him.*

- One way you KNOW you have a personal relationship with Christ is that your heart is INCLINED to want to obey Him.
- Yes, we still have a fallen nature...but the child of God has that little "tug" on our hearts when we sin...sometimes the "tug" becomes a "gripping CONVICTION" that we've sinned.
- Here's the best part: God took the initiative to bridge the gap between Him and us. A new covenant in the person of Christ.

Jeremiah 31:34

34 No longer will a man teach his neighbor,  
or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,'  
because they will all know me,  
from the least of them to the greatest,"  
declares the LORD.

"For I will forgive their wickedness  
and will remember their sins no more."

- What do you think that means?
- Under the OLD COVENANT, how did people get to God for FORGIVENESS of sins? They had to go through a PRIEST.

- Some of you may have been raised in a church, or know people who were, who say "I don't need to know the Bible...we have priests for that!" "When I need to get to God I go see a priest."
- Why don't we need a priest under the new covenant?
- We are the priests...we have a PERSONAL relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

"I will be their God"?

Here is what Charles Spurgeon said of this promise:

*This is the masterpiece of all the promises; its enjoyment makes a heaven below, and will make a heaven above. Dwell in the light of your (thy) Lord, and let your (thy) soul be always ravished with his love. Get out the marrow and fatness which this portion yields you (thee). Live up to your (thy) privileges, and rejoice with unspeakable joy.*

So, What's The Takeaway?

My goal as teacher this morning is very straightforward:

1. The best news in the world is that God desires a PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP with YOU and me.
2. If you KNOW you have that personal relationship, I hope you leave here with PRAISE ON YOUR LIPS, a SKIP IN YOUR STEP, and a DETERMINATION to KNOW HIM BETTER.
3. But, if you DON'T KNOW or you are NOT SURE I'd like to help you MAKE SURE...TODAY. You CAN have that assurance...He will put His law in you mind and write it on your heart. He will be your God, and YOU will be HIS forever. The stakes are TOO HIGH not to be sure.