



The Fiery Bones

Jeremiah 20:9

Text

Jeremiah 26:1-34

Topic

Jeremiah is told to stand in the Temple
and deliver God's Word

Title

"Temple Stand-in"

Introduction

Johnnie Cochran was able to summarize the entire nine month O.J. Simpson trial, all of its evidence and arguments, into one rhyming phrase that no one who heard it will ever forget: "If it doesn't fit, you must acquit!"

Jeremiah was on trial for speaking against the Temple. I'm no Johnnie Cochran but after reading the text I think it can be summarized into one rhyming phrase: "If *you* will repent, *God* will relent!"

Three times in our text we will encounter the word "relent" or "relented." Some versions translate it "repent" or "repented," but I think "relent" better captures the thought being communicated.

The person who is described as relenting, or at least desiring to relent, is God.

Jeremiah 26:3 Perhaps everyone will listen and turn from his evil way, that I may **relent** concerning the calamity which I purpose to bring on them because of the evil of their doings.'

Jeremiah 26:13 Now therefore, amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; then the LORD will **relent** concerning the doom that He has pronounced against you.

Jeremiah 26:19 Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah ever put him to death? Did he not fear the LORD and seek the LORD's favor? And the LORD - **relented** concerning the doom which He had pronounced against them..."

If you will repent, God will relent.

When a people who are sinning turn from their sin, when they *repent* of their sin,

God *relents* from punishing them.

I'm going to coin a word: relentful. God is relentful or, as it is put in the New Testament, He is "not willing that **any** should perish but that **all** should come to repentance" (Second Peter 3:9).

Knowing God's heart to **relent** from punishing sinners we ought to be **relentless** in serving Him.

I'll organize my thoughts around two exclamations, #1 What A Relentful God You Serve!, and #2 What A Relentless Servant You Are!

#1 What A Relentful God You Serve!

(v1-6)

God does not change His mind, nor is there ever a reason for God to “repent.” When the Bible says God repents it means He **relents** from punishing sinners because of *their* repentance. He warns rebellious people to change their minds and their direction before He must punish them for their sin. If they repent He acts according to His nature to forgive them and restore them.

Jeremiah was sent to the Temple at Jerusalem to warn the people to change their minds and their direction and to remind them God was relentful.

Jeremiah 26:1 In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came from the LORD, saying, Jeremiah 26:2 "Thus says the LORD: 'Stand in the court of the LORD's house, and speak to all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the LORD's house, all the words that I command you to speak to them. Do not diminish a word.

The fact Jeremiah could "speak to all the cities" indicates this was one of the three annual feasts in Judah when everyone was to visit the Temple.

Jeremiah was carefully charged to "speak... all the words" God gave him and to not "diminish a word." Two things come to mind:

1. First, it's important to read, teach and study the entire Bible, verse-by-verse and chapter-by-chapter.
2. Second, it's just as important in every verse to declare exactly what it says without diminishing it.

Why would you want to diminish the Word of God? There are lots of reasons. Sometimes a verse doesn't agree with your particular theology so you force it to say something it isn't really saying.

Then, too, when people are in sin they have a tendency to reinterpret verses that expose their behavior as sin.

Jeremiah 26:3 Perhaps everyone will listen and turn from his evil way, that I may relent concerning the calamity which I purpose to bring on them because of the evil of their doings.'

This is beautiful. Underline it. Highlight it. Before giving Jeremiah the words he was to speak and not diminish God revealed His intention in those words. They were deep in sin; but if they would repent, God would relent.

Are you in sin? Living in ongoing sin? Repent.

What is biblical repentance? It is a complete change of mind with regard to sin resulting in a change in behavior - a change in the direction you are headed. H.A. Ironside puts repentance into perspective for us.

It can never be out of place to proclaim salvation by free, unmerited favor to all who put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. But it needs ever to be insisted on that the faith that justifies is not a mere intellectual process - not simply crediting certain historical facts or doctrinal statements; but it is a faith that springs from a divinely wrought conviction of sin which produces a repentance that is sincere and genuine.

No man can truly believe in Christ, who does not first repent. Nor will his repentance end when he has saving faith, but the more he knows God as he goes on through the years, the deeper will that repentance become. A servant of Christ said, "I repented before I knew the meaning of the word. I have repented far more since than I did then."

There is a tendency to think you repent less after you are saved. You've heard it said that although a Christian is not sinless, he or she sins less-and-less. While that ought to be true, one reason a Christian sins less-and-less is because he or she repents more-and-more. As you grow in The Lord so does your sensitivity to sin.

Jeremiah 26:4 And you shall say to them, 'Thus says the LORD: "If you will not listen to Me, to walk in My law which I have set before you,
Jeremiah 26:5 to heed the words of My servants the prophets whom I sent to you, both rising up early and sending them (but you have not heeded),
Jeremiah 26:6 then I will make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth." ' "

"Shiloh" was the original location of the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant in the early days of the nation of Israel. God's presence there at Shiloh did not stop Him from punishing their ancestors for their sin; Shiloh lay in ruins.

God was warning Judah that He would destroy their city and their Temple as He had destroyed Shiloh - unless they repented so He might relent.

God gave the "law" so that there would be no confusion as to what constitutes sin. He sent prophets to make specific application of the law. He even gave examples of the punishments He meted out in the past upon unrepentant sinners.

The New Testament is filled with exhortations to the believer to not sin. There is no confusion as to what constitutes sin. If you are a believer the Holy Spirit lives within you and one of His ministries is to convict you of your sin. And if you look around you can see examples of believers who refused to repent and whose spiritual lives have been ruined.

Because the lightning bolt doesn't immediately strike from Heaven we tend to think God is not mindful of our sin. He is and He is warning us. I can't say when or how but eventually God must deal in discipline with His children who sin.

Rather than focus on the reality of God's eventual discipline, look at it this way. When you or I sin we are despising the Cross upon which Jesus died. We are putting some person, some possession, some passion, ahead of our love for The Lord.

It's not just to avoid discipline that we ought to repent. It's to accept discipleship so we might grow in intimacy with Jesus. In the end no person or thing will prove to be more important than your relationship with The Lord.

The fact God portrays Himself as a relenter is a reminder you were created to have fellowship with Him and that you can never be satisfied by anything other than Him.

#2 What A Relentless Servant You Are!

(v7-24)

Jeremiah's life was at stake. At least one other contemporary prophet who had preached this same message had been put to death by this same king of Judah. Nevertheless Jeremiah was relentless in delivering the message.

Jeremiah 26:7 So the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD.

Jeremiah 26:8 Now it happened, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak to all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people seized him, saying, "You will surely die!

Jeremiah 26:9 Why have you prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, 'This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without an inhabitant'?" And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

Jeremiah 26:10 When the princes of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king's house to the house of the LORD and sat down in the entry of the New Gate of the LORD's house.

Jeremiah 26:11 And the priests and the prophets spoke to the princes and all the people, saying, "This man deserves to die! For he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your ears."

Jeremiah had spoken "all that The Lord commanded him to speak" without diminishing a word. His words led to his seizure by the Temple officials and he was taken immediately to trial.

Jeremiah 26:12 Then Jeremiah spoke to all the princes and all the people, saying: "The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city with all the words that you have heard.

Jeremiah 26:13 Now therefore, amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; then the LORD will relent concerning the doom that He has pronounced against you.

Jeremiah 26:14 As for me, here I am, in your hand; do with me as seems good and proper to you.

Jeremiah 26:15 But know for certain that if you put me to death, you will surely bring innocent blood on yourselves, on this city, and on its inhabitants; for truly the LORD has sent me to you to speak all these words in your hearing."

Jeremiah offered no defense other than to reiterate his message. It might result in his being put to death but that was of no concern to him.

Christians are lifesavers - spiritual lifesavers. We are compelled to attempt to rescue sinners doomed for Hell.

Think of all the heroes who risk their lives for the sake of saving others - even others who don't appreciate it or, from one point of view, don't really deserve it. Sometimes the persons who need rescuing resist for one reason or another; but the police officer, the firefighter, the EMT, the lifeguard, is compelled to rescue them.

Christians are lifesavers - spiritual lifesavers. We are compelled to attempt to rescue sinners doomed for Hell. They most often resist, sometimes violently or at least angrily. What kind of a lifesaver would we be if we let them perish because it seemed inconvenient or dangerous? No, we must be relentless.

Jeremiah 26:16 So the princes and all the people said to the priests and the prophets, "This man does not deserve to die. For he has spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God."

On that day, at that trial, cooler heads prevailed. Jeremiah was acquitted.

Jeremiah 26:17 Then certain of the elders of the land rose up and spoke to all the assembly of the people, saying:

Jeremiah 26:18 "Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spoke to all the people of Judah, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, And the mountain of the temple Like the bare hills of the forest." '

Jeremiah 26:19 Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah ever put him to death? Did he not fear the LORD and seek the LORD's favor? And the LORD - relented concerning the doom which He had pronounced against them. But we are doing great evil against ourselves."

To validate their verdict the "princes and the people" referenced a prophet from their past, Micah, who had delivered a similar warning to repent. It reminded them, if even for a moment, that God desires to relent.

These people would continue in their rebellion and sin. This was a momentary, fleeting, change - not a true repentance. They may even have thought it big of them to have saved Jeremiah's life.

When God brings His Word to bear on something in your life, deal with it immediately and fully. Change your mind and your direction. Receive God's empowering to effect the change.

Jeremiah 26:20 Now there was also a man who prophesied in the name of the LORD, Urijah the son of Shemaiah of Kirjath Jearim, who prophesied against this city and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 26:21 And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death; but when Urijah heard it, he was afraid and fled, and went to Egypt.

Jeremiah 26:22 Then Jehoiakim the king sent men to Egypt: Elnathan the son of Achbor, and other men who went with him to Egypt.

Jeremiah 26:23 And they brought Urijah from Egypt and brought him to Jehoiakim the king, who killed him with the sword and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people.

Urijah, another prophet, delivered the same message but, in fear for his life, he fled. It's easy to criticize him especially in comparison to Jeremiah.

I don't think we have enough information to say that his fleeing was an act of disobedience. There are examples of believers in the Bible escaping when they hear of plots against them.

The story of Urijah emphasizes that a person speaking the Word of God without diminishing it is always risking their very life. It may seem less so in a country like ours but the sharing of the Gospel puts you at risk.

Jeremiah 26:24 Nevertheless the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, so that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death.

Ahikam was one of the five whom King Josiah sent to consult the prophetess Huldah in connection with the discovery of the book of the law. He was the son of Shaphan, the royal secretary, and the father of Gedaliah, governor of Judea after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. He was a spiritual guy.

Jeremiah had an ally and for that I'm sure he was grateful. With or without an ally he was relentless to minister the Gospel.

Could you be described as relentless with regards to your serving The Lord? Could I?

If we've lost some of our edge, some of our drive, we ought to consider the relentfulness of our God. People are perishing but He remains unwilling that any should perish. They are sinners for whom God has provided eternal life through Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Savior of all men - especially those who believe.

How has God gifted you? Stir-up the gift or gifts of God in you and serve Him with your whole mind, heart, soul and strength.

Set aside more time for serving The Lord. Pray about taking advantage of more opportunities to share Jesus with others. Give more financially to the work of The Lord.

*Only one life, will soon be past.
Only what's done for Christ will last.*