

24-06-01.wpd—A Nation at the Crossroads
 grace, law, rebellion, disobedience, consequences, judgment
 Jer 6:16-19

Each day we stand at a crossroads between God's will and our own.

INTRODUCTION: (Text as the Scripture Reading)

—[**Harold Camping** for a 3rd time proved himself to be a *false prophet*. He spent thousands to advertize his latest prophecy on billboards around the globe that Christ would return on May 21st 2011 to rapture Camping's followers and destroy Earth. This *dishonored* Christ, exposed the true Gospel to ridicule, and defied Christ's words in **Mar 13:32-33** (ESV), "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come."]

—God doesn't give us *the date of our death* nor of *Judgment Day*. What He gives us is His Word to guide us in right living, so He can bless us on our present journeys and bless us eternally at the end of them. [Satan uses false prophets to distract people from listening to the true ones.] In Jeremiah's day, people ignored God's message until it was too late. Today, before it's too late, our nation still has time to heed what God said through Jeremiah. *May 21st has come and gone*, and we are still here. But every new day is God's offer of grace for us to be *renewed* by following His will, not *ruined* by following our own. **HOM.idea.**

I. God's Grace Provides Crossroads for Our Redirection (v.16)

A. **v.16a**, *This is what the LORD says: "Stand at the crossroads and look..."* Then He says, "*Do the obvious at a crossroads: ask which way to go!*" What should we be asking?

1. "*ask for the ancient paths*"— Why "old ways," when the popular cry is "*Get with the times! Be contemporary! Do what's relevant!*" (Many *modern ideas* are merely untested social experiments in the laboratory of life. BUT what is truly relevant to success in life are the tried and true principles that have stood the test of time. [**A teenager asked his dad**, "*What did you wear in your day for 'safe sex'?*" The father held up his hand, and replied, "*This wedding ring.*")
2. At the crossroads, God says, "*ask where the good way is*"— Today we are a nation not known for asking "*What is morally correct?*" but "*What is popularly accepted? What is politically correct? What is financially advantageous?*" (This is where many part ways with God, because God is on the path of moral righteousness.)

B. But figuring out the right road at the crossroads is not *all* we must do—God says, "*walk in it*"

1. Truth acknowledged gives a level of mental reassurance, but truth practiced brings "*rest for your souls.*"
2. Jesus used this same terminology in **Mat 11:28-29**, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and **you will find rest for your souls.**" (Take Christ's yoke, not just His name or His teaching, but His lifestyle of service for God's Kingdom.)

TRANS: What was the response in Jeremiah's day to God's indication of the right way to take at the crossroads? "*We will not walk in it.*" One of the most ancient paths on earth is the one-flesh sexual union between a man and a woman called marriage. Our nation today is saying, "*We will not walk in it.*" America has been turning from *the good way* and asking for *the convenient way*: ["A baby's not convenient at this time? Abort it!" says government-funded Planned Parenthood.] **Each day we as a nation stand at a crossroads between God's will and our own.** God wants us to enter into His rest, not into our ruin, and He provides more than a crossroads...

II. God Grace Provides Watchmen for Our Warning (v.17)

A. What does God say? "*I appointed watchmen over you and said, 'Listen to the sound of the trumpet!'*"

1. [**In Bible times, watchmen** were posted to guard cities, so that if they saw an enemy approaching, they could blow a trumpet to warn the people.]
 2. God's *appointed watchmen* were His prophets, who spoke His Word to warn the people of the danger of departing from God's will to follow their own. (A *trumpet sound* is loud and alarming. So is the message of a prophet. People don't often like it!)
- B. How did they respond to God's warning in the mouth of Jeremiah? They said, "*We will not listen.*" (This what we see in our time—an unwillingness to heed God's Word, especially His warnings about judgment on sin: "*We don't want to hear it! If you talk about God, talk about pleasant things, not about judgment!*")

TRANS: But if we reject God's voice and listen to what appeal to us, we risk disaster. [Homemade flea traps: a candle inside a jar sitting on a shallow plate of soapy water. Fleas jump toward the light, hit the smooth glass, fall into the water and drown.] Flea-thinkers and free-thinkers both jump to what

appeals to them, and it can lead to ruin. *God's grace* provides a crossroads for redirection, and watchmen to warn us of the disaster in forsaking God. But finally, if that grace is rejected....

III. God's Justice Provides Witnesses of Our Rebellion (v.18-19)

- A. v.18-19, *Therefore hear, O nations; observe, O witnesses, what will happen to them. Hear, O earth: I am bringing disaster on this people, the fruit of their schemes, because they have not listened to my words and have rejected my law.* (Why *witnesses*? Why an audience? Well, what kind of court system would hold trials and sentence people in secret? No one would know why a person went to prison.)
1. God wants all nations to know the reality of the situation. He calls upon the whole earth to observe the fairness of His justice.
 2. Jesus warned us all about this fact— Luke 12:2-3 (ESV), Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops. (In the true and final Supreme Court of eternity, all the cover-ups by national officials will be uncovered, every private sin of church leaders will be made public, no dishonesty of any politician will remain hidden. All will be revealed! What a sobering thought for them, and for every one of us!)
- B. God says He's *bringing disaster on this people*, and He describes that *disaster as the fruit of their schemes* (a result of their chosen direction at the crossroads of life between God's will and their own will.)
1. The consequences of rebellion are self-inflicted, God says, *because they have not listened to my words and have rejected my law*.
 2. He calls for all to witness His justice in meting out those consequences, because He is a *God of truth* and wants everyone to know that the way of falsehood is the way of disaster.

CONCLUSION:

—Why does God raise up prophets like Jeremiah or preachers like me? It's because He graciously provides watchmen to warn us of the danger of disobeying our Creator. Why does He graciously give us crossroads, not just once, but often throughout our lifetime and in the life of every nation? It's because He graciously wants to turn us into the path of blessing, away from the waywardness of our own will and into the heavenly way of His will.

Jeremiah 6:16-19 (NIV)

16 This is what the LORD says:

“Stand at the crossroads and look;

ask for the ancient paths,

ask where the good way is, and walk in it,

and you will find rest for your souls.

But you said, ‘We will not walk in it.’

17 I appointed watchmen over you and said,

‘Listen to the sound of the trumpet!’

But you said, ‘We will not listen.’

18 Therefore hear, O nations;

observe, O witnesses,

what will happen to them.

19 Hear, O earth:

I am bringing disaster on this people,

the fruit of their schemes,

because they have not listened to my words

and have rejected my law.