



1. 'Avoiding burn-out'

Jeremiah 2.¹⁻⁸

Background

Jeremiah lived during a time of huge upheaval, both impending and then actual – the point in Israel's history when in order to build for the future, the Lord had to reduce His people and their city to rubble.

The physical desolation which would eventually come during the course of his long ministry was off-the-scale traumatic for a people who'd presumed on God's grace and had assumed such a fate would never be allowed: their whole long history had been one in which they'd experienced the grace and patience of God to an extraordinary degree, and in which they'd seen Him time and again at work to rescue them and deliver them from oppressors.

They refused to believe that this disaster would happen and stubbornly swung between both ridiculing and vilifying the prophet Jeremiah for insisting that such a collapse of their culture was coming. The charge to proclaim this message 'in the hearing of Jerusalem' was, thus, a challenging and costly task from the outset for this young man.

The circumstances into which he brought God's message were remarkably similar to the state of our own land today, with our own comparable history of God's always gracious and sometimes quite extraordinary dealings with us as a nation. And it's a narrative, too, which can be played out in the life of individual believers as well.

Reading through this chapter of Jeremiah gives you a penetrating analysis of the ways in which a people singularly blessed by God can nonetheless go badly off the rails. It can happen to nations and it can happen to individuals. These opening verses of the chapter point up the contrast between how it had been at the beginning and what Israel's relationship with the Lord had become – the slide from initial 'devotion' into terminal decline.

How does that happen? What went so wrong in the nation of Israel? How does our love for the Lord grow cold? What can be done to guard against such a terrible spiritual malaise? How can you keep the fires of your love for the Lord ablaze? How can you avoid 'burn-out'?

It's not a long passage so read it all, but if you're pressed for time start with 'days' (1), (3) and (4) for which there are additional questions.

1) Monday 20th November – the original proclaimers

Read [Jeremiah 2.1-2](#)

“.. go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem ..” (Jer.2.1)

The Lord’s call on Jeremiah as a young man ([Jer.1.7-8](#)) is in some respects His call on the lives of all His people – Peter makes that clear in his first letter ([1 Pet.2.9](#)). The message of the gospel needs to be proclaimed, and the Lord bids His people speak!

To what extent is God’s call to Jeremiah applicable to all Christians, and how do you react when you read it?

Read [Jer.1.6-8](#): what was God’s answer to the excuses Jeremiah offered, and how does that answer of God apply to you?

What message do you think God means His people here to be speaking to the city and land in which we live?

How can God’s Word be proclaimed “in the hearing of Jerusalem” if the city isn’t listening?

How should Christians, and the church more corporately, be proclaiming God’s analysis of our nation’s life?

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for the gift of Your Holy Spirit, and the promise You give of power. Give me wisdom to know what to say to people, and the boldness to say it!

2) Tuesday 21st November – devoted to Jesus

Read [Jeremiah 2.1-2](#)

“.. I remember the devotion of your youth ..” (Jer.2.2)

Compared to what the people had become in Jeremiah’s time, their response to the Lord when first they’d been delivered from slavery in Egypt was sheer devotion – a love for the Lord and a readiness to follow Him wherever. Have you lost that devotion?

How did your devotion to the Lord show when you first entrusted your life to Him?

What reasons can you recognise from your own experience why your love for the Lord can sometimes cool and fade, and how can you guard against that?

Prayer: Holy Spirit of God, You came as flames of fire at Pentecost: kindle in my heart at the start of each day a fiery love for my Saviour, that I may burn brightly for Him.

3) Wednesday 22nd November – bought with a price

Read [Jeremiah 2.3](#)

“.. Israel was holy to the Lord ..” (Jer.2.3)

God’s saving work in the lives of His people is not only for their enrichment, but more significantly for the display of His glory – a demonstration before the watching world of His wisdom, love and power: believers are not their own but set apart for His glory.

What was God’s intention in dealing with Israel as He did and declaring Israel to be ‘holy to the Lord’? What was meant by that?

What are the implications of these verses for you as believer (see [1 Pet.2.9](#))?

What’s meant by describing Israel as “the firstfruits of His harvest”?

What comfort can Christians take from the statement that “all who devoured her were held guilty, and disaster overtook them”?

Prayer: Help me never to forget, my Lord, that I am not my own, but have been bought with a price: I consecrate my life afresh to You today – may it be lived for Your glory.

4) Thursday 23rd November – defined by your worship

Read [Jeremiah 2.4-5](#)

“.. what fault did your ancestors find in Me that they strayed so far ..” (Jer.2.5)

They say that ‘You are what you eat’. Maybe. But you certainly get to be like what you worship. Worship the Lord – and you will be like Him ([1 Jn.3.2](#), [Rom.8.29](#)). Worship that which is ultimately worthless – and you end up worthless yourself ([Ps.115.1-8](#)).

Why do we become like what we worship?

What are the ‘worthless idols’ which are commonly ‘followed’ today?

In what sense do those who follow them become ‘worthless themselves’?

How might you explain to your friends, colleagues, or neighbours the ultimate ‘worthlessness’ of what they’re investing their lives in?

Prayer: How easily I can be distracted and taken up with ‘other things’. Keep my eyes fixed on Yourself, O Lord, that my life may be more and more conformed to Yours.

5) Friday 24th November – remember, remember

Read [Jeremiah 2.6](#)

“.. they did not ask, ‘Where is the Lord who brought us up out of Egypt ..’” (Jer.2.6)

How prone we all are to forget! We forget how once we were slaves, just how dreadful that slavery was, just how high was the price that was paid to secure our release from the bondage of sin, how kind our great Saviour has been in meeting our every need.

Cast your mind back over all God's dealings with you – for what have you cause to be daily and lastingly thankful to Him?

How can you prevent there being this sort of 'forgetfulness' in your own life?

Prayer: *Thank You, O my Father, for giving us Your Son, and leaving Your Spirit 'til the work on earth is done. How altogether good and gracious You have been to me, O God!*

6) Saturday 25th November – grateful for God's goodness

Read [Jeremiah 2.7](#)

".. I brought you into a fertile land .." (Jer.2.7)

What's been your response to the goodness of God? The delightful land God gave to His people was defiled by their petulant self-indulgence. Like Adam and Eve in the garden, surrounded by fruit in abundance, God's people wanted something else.

In what sense can the realm into which you've been brought by Christ be described as 'a fertile land'?

How did the people of Israel 'defile' God's land and make His inheritance 'detestable'?

Prayer: *Praise be to You, my God, for You have blessed Your people in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms! May my living display such generosity too!*

7) Sunday 26th November – a leadership void

Read [Jeremiah 2.8](#)

".. the leaders rebelled against Me .." (Jer.2.8)

The demise of the people of God was down to the sin of their leaders. In every sphere of the nation's life, those in positions of leadership had signally failed. That's why we're bidden to pray for our leaders ([1 Tim.2.1-4](#)). Criticism is easy – prayer is harder!

In what ways could it be argued that there has been a similar failure of leadership in our contemporary society?

There are four categories of leader instanced in this verse: what would be the parallels in our society today and how might you pray for each of them?

Prayer: *O God of earth and altar, bow down and hear our cry; our earthly rulers falter, our people drift and die; the walls of gold entomb us, the swords of scorn divide. Take not Thy thunder from us but take away our pride. [G K Chesterton]*