

24-02-01.wpd—The Message of Jeremiah
apostasy, self-direction, self-sufficiency, idolatry, fear of God
Jer 2:12-19

The benefits of *following God* are lost by *forsaking Him*.

INTRODUCTION:

–**Previous sermons** in this series: The Call of Jeremiah—*Who we are, and what we are to do and say, all depend on God*; The Ministry of Jeremiah—*Our confidence comes by trusting God’s Word and following His will*. This sermon is entitled, The Message of Jeremiah, and what the Scripture reading in Jeremiah today teaches us is that **The benefits of following God are lost by forsaking Him.**

–Some think the God revealed in Scripture is “*out to get us*.” In a way, He **is**. He’s *out to get us to follow Him*. But He’s not out there waiting to catch us doing something wrong, so He can nail us and say, “*AHA! You lousy sinners... ‘thought you could get away with it! I’ll show YOU!’... as He tosses a few lightning bolts our way*. That’s not the God of the Bible, who sends prophets to His wayward people to try to get them back on safe ground. This is exactly why He raised up the prophet Jeremiah. The **message of Jeremiah** was meant to call God’s people back from the insanity of *forsaking God* and for abandoning His ways. –God’s people basically get into trouble for two things: **v.13**, “*My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.*”

I. The Sin of Forsaking God [repeated three times in the passage]

- A. Most Christians never imagine that they are *forsaking God*, but it does happen in subtle ways, usually through neglect by being preoccupied with other things (we don’t pray, we don’t get quiet to meditate, we don’t listen for His voice in the Word or in life.)
- B. We might be confessing what it says in **Ps 36:9**, For with you [Lord] is the fountain of life; in your light we see light. (But this truth about God is not just to be *on our lips*—it must be *lived out* on a daily basis.)
- C. We can get sidetracked in seeking other resources for our *spiritual refreshment*, trying to quench the thirst of our inner life with entertainment, or hobbies, or go shopping. (But our soul’s true refreshment comes only from the presence of the One who made us and who is our “*spring of living water*.”

TRANS: *Forsaking God* is not so much an *action* but an *attitude*. God is all around us. We can find His grace present everywhere, in *people*, in *places*, in all the events and circumstances and activities of daily life. [There was a young man, desperately seeking God, who asked an old man, “How can I see God?” After pondering the question silently for quite some time, the old man answered, “I’m not sure that I can help you. You see, I have a different problem. I cannot *not* see Him.”] We *forsake God* when we *forget* His presence and His promise, “*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*” But the trouble is two-fold, or as some translations put it, a “**double-evil**”: “*My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.*” This latter sin is....

II. The Sin of False Self-Sufficiency

- A. [In ancient times, cisterns were dug in the ground to capture and store rainwater; they were a limited resource for water, especially if they leaked.] God says that by forsaking Him, we abandon an endless stream of thirst-quenching water from the fountain of life, and instead we put our trust in *self-sufficiency*, devising *insufficient* plans to keep our thirst quenched.
- B. Historically, the Israelites forsook God as their resource and put their trust in alliances with the pagan nations of Assyria and Egypt— **v.18**, “*Now why go to Egypt to drink water from the Shihor [Nile]? And why go to Assyria to drink water from the River [Euphrates]?”* (This was a false hope for their protection against Babylon, but can we make the same kind of mistake?)
 1. Can we place our trust in the world economy? (A silly question!)
 2. Can we put our trust in the promises of politicians? (Real silly!)
 3. Can we trust any society on earth to lead us beside quiet waters, restore our souls, and guide us in paths of righteousness?

TRANS: What happens when we invest our confidence in pagan resources? We slowly begin to change our attitude toward life. We pick up the value-system that’s in vogue around us. What’s “politically correct” overshadows what’s correct in God’s eyes. We drink from the waters of where we are standing. If we stand with God, we drink from the overflowing abundance of *the fountain of life*. If we stand with the world, we drink from “*broken cisterns that cannot hold water.*” **The benefits of following God are lost by forsaking Him.**

III. Sin Brings Its Own Punishment

v.17, 19, Have you not brought this on yourselves by forsaking the LORD your God when he led you in the way?... *Your wickedness will punish you; your backsliding will rebuke you. Consider then and realize how evil and bitter it is for you when you forsake the LORD your God and have no awe of me,*” declares the Lord, the LORD Almighty.

- A. Turn off the light, and what do you get? Darkness. Take away the water, and what do you have? Desert. Abandon the truth, and what remains? Deception. (God has *real benefits* to offer merely by His presence in our lives, **BUT** without Him, everything’s a sham. It might have a nice paint job on the surface, but it’s empty, like a broken, leaking cistern that can’t hold what we need for survival.)
- B. The advice of a caring God, the admonition of a loving God, the urgent appeal of a gracious God is for us to “*consider then and realize how evil and bitter it is for you when you forsake the LORD your God and have no awe [no fear] of me.*”

CONCLUSION:

–This is **the message** in the mouth of **Jeremiah** the prophet, and God recorded it for us, because the danger still persist today.

–This passage began with God calling upon heaven as a witness to this great human tragedy– v.12, *Be appalled at this, O heavens, and shudder with great horror,*” declares the LORD. **The benefits of following God** are so many! The Bible is full of so many wonderful promises that God wants us to believe in. But they become null and void when we neglect them in favor of the popular promises made to sound so convincing by this temporary world. The *good things, the real things, the lasting things* that God wants us to enjoy **are lost by forsaking Him.**

Jeremiah 2:12-19 (NIV)

12 Be appalled at this, O heavens, and shudder with great horror,” declares the LORD.

13 “My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

14 Is Israel a servant, a slave by birth? Why then has he become plunder?

15 Lions have roared; they have growled at him. They have laid waste his land; his towns are burned and deserted.

16 Also, the men of Memphis and Tahpanhes have shaved the crown of your head.

17 Have you not brought this on yourselves by forsaking the LORD your God when he led you in the way?

18 Now why go to Egypt to drink water from the Shihor? And why go to Assyria to drink water from the River?

19 Your wickedness will punish you; your backsliding will rebuke you. Consider then and realize how evil and bitter it is for you when you forsake the LORD your God and have no awe of me,” declares the Lord, the LORD Almighty.