

July 30 — Small Blisters or Gaping Wounds?

READ

Jeremiah 2:23-4:31, 5:1-19

Jeremiah 3:12-13, *“Therefore, go and give this message to Israel. * This is what the Lord says: ‘O Israel, my faithless people come home to Me again, for I am merciful. I will not be angry with you forever. Only acknowledge your guilt. Admit that you rebelled against the Lord your God and committed adultery against Him by worshiping idols under every green tree. Confess that you refused to listen to My voice. I, the Lord, have spoken!’ ”*

THINK

No one enjoys admitting their mistakes. There’s just something in us that makes it hard to say the three little words: I was wrong. But, such confession is good for the soul in every way. Likewise, trying to keep sins secret is like ignoring a small blister. As our sins compound, the blister begins to fester. And the longer we try to avoid confession, the more that once-small blister becomes a gaping wound that wreaks havoc in our lives.

In today’s reading, Jeremiah calls on the Israelites to admit their sins and turn back to God. God was angry and didn’t mince words, but, as always, God’s desire was for His people to experience His mercy and love.

So, if God already knows what we’ve done wrong, why, then, does He want us to admit our sins? Because we need to see our sin from His perspective. Confession is for our good, not His. He knows we’re only as sick as our secrets. The longer we try to conceal them, the more they fester and lead to a cascading effect of costly consequences.

Confession unleashes the blessing and purpose God wants to pour out on our lives. So, take care of that “small blister” and get ready for the blessings that will flow forth as you stay afoot on the path of purpose!

PRAY

Heavenly Father, Today I turn back to You and admit the following sins: _____. Give me the strength, wisdom, and discernment to stay on the right path as I seek to honor You and fulfill the life of purpose that You’ve called me to live. Amen.

July 31 — Healing Truth

READ

Jeremiah 5:20-6:30
2 Kings 22:3-20
2 Chronicles 34:8-28

Jeremiah 6:13-15, *“From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit. They dress the wound of My people as though it were not serious. ‘Peace, peace,’ they say, when there is no peace. Are they ashamed of their detestable conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; they will be brought down when I punish them, ’says the Lord.”*

THINK

The ER in a hospital is an intense place. There’s no doubt that doctors and nurses see a variety of serious issues each day. As trained professionals, they’ve taken an oath to properly assess each case and administer the appropriate treatment to help each patient. It would be unethical to tell a patient that their broken limb is simply a minor muscle cramp. It would be malpractice to tell someone having a heartache that it’s just a little indigestion or that a gaping wound simply needs a band-aid.

This type of mistreatment of patients seems far-fetched to us, yet, this is why, in today's reading, we see God calling out the prophets and priests in Israel who were tasked with guiding His people toward spiritual health. They were more concerned with their position than they were about their responsibility of pointing people towards God. Instead of speaking truth into the lives of those who needed to experience healing and restoration with God, they continued to allow the Israelites to pave their path of self-destruction until they, too, fell to that same destruction.

Today, our world is hemorrhaging and being offered band-aids by those who don’t know the truth of their Creator. They’re blind to the fact that we are sinners, but God loved us enough to send His only Son to die for our sins and defeat death to pave the way towards eternal life. Freedom and healing begin with facing the truth! As Christ-followers, we have what’s needed to mend the gaping wounds of our society — the absolute truth of God — that’s far too often replaced by the enemy’s deception and moral relativism. Therefore, know The Truth! It’s critical for your spiritual healing and the healing of others around you who are desperately in need of the ultimate Doctor — Jesus Christ!

PRAY

Heavenly Father, Thank You for the absolute truth found in Your Word. Help me to consistently spend time in it each day for my spiritual growth and transformation. Use me to help others so they can experience Your overwhelming love and grace. Amen.

August 1 — Refreshed and Renewed

READ

2 Kings 23:1-28

2 Chronicles 34:29-33, 35:1-19

Nahum 1:1-15, 2:1-13, 3:1-19

2 Kings 23:2-3, *“And the king went up to the Temple of the Lord with all the people of Judah and Jerusalem, along with the priests and the prophets — all the people from the least to the greatest. There, the king read to them the entire Book of the Covenant that had been found in the Lord’s Temple. The king took his place of authority beside the pillar and renewed the covenant in the Lord’s presence. He pledged to obey the Lord by keeping all His commands, laws, and decrees with all his heart and soul. In this way, he confirmed all the terms of the covenant that were written in the scroll, and all the people pledged themselves to the covenant.”*

THINK

When you think of feeling refreshed, what comes to mind? A dip in the pool on a hot day? A Sunday afternoon nap? A tall glass of iced tea? What about feeling refreshed spiritually? Likely, spending time in God’s Word comes to mind. Now, imagine if the Bible had been missing for fifty-seven years. That is what had happened in Judah until King Josiah had ordered the temple to undergo some renovations when the Book of the Law — God’s Word — was finally located after over five decades! This was evident in how the people of Judah were living as they partook in idol worship and other sinful practices.

King Josiah had been faithful to follow the Lord, but even he hadn’t been exposed to the power of God’s Word. When he first heard it read, he was so overcome with emotion that he tore his robes. He was shaken to the core because it so exposed his sins and the sins of his people. Soon after, he heard a prophecy of Judah’s coming judgment. But instead of being discouraged, he intensified his effort to get his fellow Hebrews back on track with God, calling for the Book of the Law to be read before all the people and re-establish the covenant between God and His people, to refresh and renew their relationship with the Lord.

Today’s reading is a great reminder of how easy it is to slip and slide off the righteous path God has set before us. It proves how important it is to spend time regularly in the Word, be involved in church, and rid ourselves of anything distracting us from living out God’s best. So, today, take a few moments to refresh and renew your relationship with God. What steps do you need to take to reconnect and recommit to whatever’s been lacking in your daily walk with Christ? Because when He comes first, everything else falls into place as we live in the sweet spot of His blessing and grace!

PRAY

Heavenly Father, Thank You for Your Word. I seek to obey all that’s in it as I walk the path of purpose that You’ve placed before me. Help me rid myself of anything distracting me from keeping You at the forefront of my life. Amen.

August 2 — Fall Into Faith

READ

Habakkuk 1:1-3:19

Zephaniah 1:1-2:7

Habakkuk 2:4, *"Look at the proud! They trust in themselves, and their lives are crooked. But the righteous will live by their faithfulness to God."*

THINK

"Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall." Does Proverbs 16:18 ever jump off the page when you come across it? Maybe it's because being prideful happens to the best of us. It's so easy to think we know what's best as we plan and direct each step, trusting in our own understanding and intellect.

By nature, we cling to power with the desire to be in control. The world tells us if we don't have a plan, if we don't have our fingers on the dials, success will evade us. Clenching our fists with pride, we fall into believing we have all the answers, that we are in control — maybe even thinking we don't really need to rely on God. We've got this! Quickly, though, we'll come toppling down.

It isn't until we learn to release our lives and plans to God that we're able to experience what living by faith truly looks like. It's understanding we don't have to be in control because we have a relationship with the One who is. God desires to direct and guide each step of our lives and lead us to what He has in store, which is far greater than anything we could ever achieve on our own. So, instead of falling into pride, fall into faith — faith in the Almighty God who reigns supreme!

PRAY

Dear God, I'm so thankful that I don't have to have it all together because You do. I trust You to guide my every step, knowing You have a plan and purpose for my life. Help me not to fall into pride but to take a giant leap into faith! Amen.

August 3 — At That Time

READ

Zephaniah 2:8-3:20
2 Chronicles 35:20-27
2 Kings 23:29-30
Jeremiah 47:1-48:47

Zephaniah 3:19-20, *“At that time I will deal with all who oppressed you. I will rescue the lame; I will gather the exiles. I will give them praise and honor in every land where they have suffered shame. At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes, ’says the Lord.”*

THINK

Marathon runners experience a multitude of emotions during a race. With the feeling of excitement at the beginning and exhilaration at the end, most competitors also endure fatigue, pain, discomfort, and the temptation to quit. As the mile markers hit double-digits and continue to climb, however, hope sets in because the end is drawing near with the promise of cheers, a reward, a sense of accomplishment — and the treasured moment to sit and relax!

The Israelites had fallen into sin and were now dealing with the consequences of God’s judgment. But those who placed their faith in God always had a reason for hope. Despite the foreign oppression they faced, the shame of exile, and being forced to adapt to a completely different culture’s customs, they trusted in God’s promise of future restoration and reward.

As Christ-followers, God never promised us complete comfort or a trouble-free existence on earth. And as we run this marathon called life, we’ll inevitably struggle at different legs of the race. But, through Christ, we have the future hope of heaven. When we cross the finish line, we will meet our Savior face-to-face as we gather with other believers in a home like none other, in absolute paradise. Doesn’t it give you goosebumps to just think about the joy we will experience *at that time* and forevermore?!

PRAY

Thank You, God, for salvation through Jesus Christ. My hope is not in material things, and my home is not here on Earth. As I go through this day, help me remember that my hope is in You, and my home is in heaven. I want to live my life as a testament to Your goodness and grace!
Amen.

August 4 — Unflappable

READ

2 Chronicles 36:1-5

2 Kings 23:31-24:1-4

Jeremiah 22:1-23, 26:1-24, 25:1-14

Jeremiah 26:13-14, *“Now reform your ways and your actions and obey the Lord your God. Then the Lord will relent and not bring the disaster He has pronounced against you. As for me, I am in your hands; do with me whatever you think is good and right.”*

THINK

In the face of opposition, with people gunning for you, have you ever had to take a deep breath and swallow the huge gulp in your throat as you stood up for what was right? You know, that ever-so-unpopular stance that left you feeling isolated and alone? Or, at the very least, maybe you’ve had to tell someone something they really needed to hear, knowing full well it would be received as criticism and elicit a bristly response.

No matter the circumstances you endured, it’s likely no match for what God called Jeremiah to communicate to the people of Judah. He had a message that didn’t just land him a good tongue-lashing in return but, rather, set off a full-fledged revolt against him. We have to give him some major props because, despite the outcome, he trusted that his life was in God’s hands.

Certain situations require a heavy dose of faith. And, it’s easy to say — and even think — that we truly trust God. But, when the rubber meets the road, do we really take that same type of unflappable stance? Because doing the right thing rubs many people the wrong way.

Nonetheless, when we stick with God’s plan and forge ahead undeterred by the opposition, we can always trust that we, too, will be safe and secure in God’s hands, confident in His provision and strength!

PRAY

Lord, I want to be bold like Jeremiah with an unwavering determination to do what’s right. Grant me that same measure of faith and strength to face opposition confidently in Your name. Thank You for Your faithfulness! Amen.

August 5 — Discipline in Due Measure

READ

Jeremiah 25:15-38, 36:1-32, 45:1-5, 46:1-28

Jeremiah 46:28, *“Do not be afraid, Jacob my servant, for I am with you, declared the Lord. Though I completely destroy all the nations among which I scatter you, I will not completely destroy you. I will discipline you but only in due measure; I will not let you go entirely unpunished.”*

THINK

No one likes to be punished. Even when we know we are in the wrong, we usually want to escape the consequences of our actions.

But the “punishment,” or rather, the “discipline” that comes from God, is never senseless or needlessly vindictive — it always has a purpose. A perfect Father, He uses punishment to correct and purify us. It may not be pleasant in the present moment, but it is ultimately for our good. Some may shy away from this aspect of God — “punishment” sounds so harsh, and contemporary views of Christianity tend to lean into God’s love and deemphasize His righteousness and judgment. But when we turn away from Him, we will face the consequences of our sin. The good news is that God can use those as learning experiences to bring us back to Him.

As He did with Israel, He does not turn the full measure of His wrath on us. He does not desire to destroy us as He does the Enemy. Instead, we experience the stern but loving correction of a Father who desires the best for us and knows just the measure we need.

PRAY

God, Thank You for Your righteous justice and mercy. Thank You for caring about me so much that You would correct me. Help me receive it with Your grace. Lord, I just want to become more like You. In Jesus ’name, Amen.