

THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF JEREMIAH
IV. Dealing With Ambivalent Feelings For The Sinful
(Jeremiah 8:18-9:9)

I. Introduction

- A. God called Jeremiah to minister in the Kingdom of Judah during its spiritual decline until God's judgment fell in the form of the Babylonian invasion and captivity. Jeremiah's spiritual ministry is then similar to what God's servants face in our current era of spiritual decline in the last part of Church History.
- B. We thus view Jeremiah 8:18-9:9 on Jeremiah's ambivalent feelings for the sinful for insight and application:

II. Dealing With Ambivalent Feelings For The Sinful, Jeremiah 8:18-9:9.

- A. Jeremiah deeply grieved over the sufferings of his sinful people due to God's judgment, Jeremiah 8:18-9:1:
 - 1. It is difficult to translate the first word of Jeremiah 8:18, but the study of a number of manuscripts has led many scholars to split that word "into two words translated as in the Revised Standard Version 'beyond healing' (cf. also the Dutch New Version)." (A. R. Hurst, O. T. Translation Problems, 1960, p. 162)
 - 2. Thus, Jeremiah wrote that his sorrow was "beyond healing," his inner man was faint within him, Jer. 8:18.
 - 3. He referred to the cry of his troubled countrymen who were already in Babylonian Captivity in a distant land who were asking if the Lord was no longer in Zion, if her King was not within her, Jer. 8:19a.
 - 4. God's reply was that the problem was not God's supposed absence from Jerusalem, but that Judah's people had provoked Him with their graven images and foreign idols, that He had thus sent them off into captivity in a foreign land, Jeremiah 8:19b.
 - 5. The cry of Judah's captive people in Babylon was that the harvest opportunity to repent was past, the summer of a chance to turn from idolatry had ended, but they were not saved from judgment, Jer. 8:20. [During the Great Awakening, this verse was powerfully used in a sermon in Litchfield, Connecticut!]
 - 6. Jeremiah empathized with his suffering people in Babylon, claiming that for their brokenness he was broken, he mourned and dismay had taken hold of him, Jeremiah 8:21. Jeremiah asked if there was no balm of the resin of the storax tree that grew in Gilead east of the Jordan River to heal his people's hurt, Jeremiah 8:22 (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1141). He rhetorically asked if there was no physician there to heal his people of the pain of their sense of loss in Babylon, Jeremiah 8:23.
 - 7. Known as the "weeping prophet," Jeremiah wished that his head were waters and his eyes a fountain of tears that he might weep day and night for his people, Jeremiah 9:1!
- B. Conversely, Jeremiah's grief over his people's suffering was countered by his loathing of their sins, Jer. 9:2-9:
 - 1. Immediately after expressing great sorrow for his suffering people, Jeremiah wished that he had a traveler's lodging place in the desert that he might leave his people and go away from them, Jer. 9:2a!
 - 2. This sudden shift from sorrow to loathing expressed Jeremiah's ambivalent feelings toward his people, that though he empathized with their suffering in judgment, he also abhorred their sins, Jeremiah 9:2b-6:
 - a. The people were all adulterers, having turned from the Lord, treacherous as a people, Jeremiah 9:2b.
 - b. They bent their tongue like a bow, a figurative expression of using their words to injure others, and they proceeded from one level of evil to the next level, not knowing the Lord, Jeremiah 9:3.
 - c. God warned everyone to beware of his neighbor, not to trust even in one's brother, for every brother was a deceiver and every neighbor went about as a destructive slanderer, Jeremiah 9:4.
 - d. Everyone deceived his neighbor, no one spoke the truth, they had taught their tongues to speak lies and wearied themselves of committing iniquity because they were sinning so much, Jeremiah 9:5.
 - e. The people of Judah heaped oppression upon oppression, deceit upon deceit, refusing to know the Lord so as to function disrespectfully toward God and toward one another, Jeremiah 9:6.
 - 3. For this reason, God would refine and test His people, for He had no other choice, Jeremiah 9:7. Their tongues were like deadly arrows, speaking deceitfully where each spoke peace to his neighbor while in his heart he planned an ambush for him to take destructive advantage of him, Jeremiah 9:8.
 - 4. Because of this breakdown of trust in society, God rhetorically asked if He should not punish the people of Judah for such sins, if He should not avenge Himself on a nation such as this, Jeremiah 9:9.

Lesson: *Jeremiah's deep empathy for the sufferings of his people was equally met with his revulsion of their sins. He could thus identify with the Lord's decision to inflict painful sorrow upon Jeremiah's people for their sins.*

Application: *May we grieve over the sins of believers but also accept God's justice in administering His discipline.*