
Words of Truth

“They Have Not Discovered Thine Iniquity”

By: Brian A. Yeager

As the children of Israel faced a time in their history of rampant apostasy that lead them into captivity, they loved to hear from their prophets. The problem was, their choices in what prophets they listened to. During this time of their history we read this: *“Declare this in the house of Jacob, and publish it in Judah, saying, Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not: Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone. Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest. Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you. For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men. As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich. They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof”* (Jeremiah 5:20-31)?

Today, there is no Babylonian captivity coming for the apostate people of God. There are no prophets prophesying (I Corinthians 13:8-13). What is the same today is that many people love to listen to false teaching. Also, similar to what we read above, there is not much that can be done about it. We can mark those who teach error and we do (Romans 16:17-18). We can make sure that the charge is made that no other doctrines are taught (I Timothy 1:3-7). However, when people want their ears tickled they will just keep on that course even though the truth teaches otherwise (II Timothy 4:1-5).

The obvious problem with this is that those who are led by the false teachers are lost (Isaiah 9:16 and Matthew 15:1-14). Most false teachers teach for their own profit (II Peter 2:1-3). As a result, those in sin under these false teachers are not being told how to correct their errors. False teachers falsely reassure those in sin (II Peter 2:17-22).

False Teachers Embolden The Erring

The prophets wrote this about Israel of old: *“And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err. I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah... Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people; because the children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city. They say to their mothers, Where is corn and wine? when they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city, when their soul was poured out into their mothers' bosom. What thing shall I take to witness for thee? what thing shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion? for thy breach is great like the sea: who can heal thee? Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee: and they have not discovered thine iniquity, to turn away thy captivity; but have seen for thee false burdens and causes of banishment... Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life”* (Jeremiah 23:13-14, Lamentations 2:11-14, and Ezekiel 13:22).

How would the Israelites have ever turned back to God when they were choosing to hear messages of false peace? What we have read is that rather than thinking about repentance, they were strengthened in their erring ways. We are supposed to read examples such as those and learn from them for today (Romans 15:4 and I Corinthians 10:1-12). So, what can we learn in this brief study?

Applying This To Us

Those who choose to plainly teach the truth will be unpopular (John 3:19-21). We need men who will expose sin rather than teach so that people will like them (I Thessalonians 2:1-12). Then, those men need to point forth the way to repentance either very directly (Luke 13:1-5, Galatians 2:11-17, and Titus 1:10-14) or with meekness (Acts 18:24-28 and II Timothy 2:24-26) depending on the situation (Jude 1:22-23).

Conclusion

Those who love you will correct you (Proverbs 27:5-6 and Revelation 3:19). Often, the truth is hard to hear when you're wrong. You can hear it, be pricked in your heart, and obey the truth (Acts 2:36-41). You could also choose to be pricked and attack the messenger (Acts 7:51-60). Know this though, only the truth will set you free (John 8:31-32). Don't look to cheerleaders of sin. Look to those who teach what you need to hear (i.e. Acts 20:20).