

Text: Jeremiah 32:36-41

Title: “The Overwhelming Activity of God”

Let's open our Bibles to Jeremiah 32. We're going to push the pause button on this series in Jeremiah today. I'd love to press on through all fifty-two chapters, but there's another series of messages the Lord has given me for the remainder of this Fall and I'm eager to get to it.

This is actually a pretty good place in Jeremiah to pause. The first half of Jeremiah reveal God's anger against His people for turning their backs to Him, not their faces. He's a holy God and the only One in the universe worthy of our worship. Worship of anything or anyone other than the Lord is false and therefore God is opposed to it because He is truth. The nation of Israel was called and chosen to be the people among all the nations to give Him glory, but they had failed to do that. So like a parent disciplining a rebellious child the Lord has disciplined His people for turning their backs to Him. The city of Jerusalem and the Temple that they had desecrated by their idolatry will all be destroyed by the Babylonians. Most of the people will be carried into exile for seventy years to teach them not to worship idols. So most of the book of Jeremiah, up to this point, revolves around God's plans to discipline Israel and Judah. And from this point to the end of the book shows the Lord's plans to judge the nations surrounding Israel for their idolatrous ways.

But here in the middle of the book are four chapters, Jeremiah 30-33, that contain a distinct message that God has for His people ... a book within the book. It is sometimes called the Book of Comfort or Consolation because it reveals God's heart for His people. God is about to turn from His fierce anger against their sin. He will establish a New Covenant with them and they will be returned to their homeland, but most importantly they will be restored in their relationship with God. **Read Jeremiah 32:36-38.**

So the people have been scattered into exile, but they will be gathered back to their homeland. God's wrath has been focused like a laser on them, but now in His great love the Lord will turn from His wrath. Go home this afternoon and read Jeremiah 33 and see how they will no longer live in fear; they will rest secure. There will be joy and laughter in the streets where there was only cries of pain and agony. They have been estranged from their God, but now the relationship will be restored and they will be reconciled. But of all the changes that God intends to bring about through this New Covenant here's the most amazing and the most miraculous. **Read Jeremiah 32:39-41.**

God hasn't given up on them. Even though their backs have been turned to Him, He has not turned His back on them. Even while they are rebelling against Him, God is pursuing them. You see, when we go through seasons of God's discipline (or any adversity or trial for that matter) we might wonder if God has just given up on us. Does He still love us? Is He mad at us? In fact, some of you this morning aren't quite sure what God thinks about you. Maybe you think He's just going about His business of running the universe and He's not really giving you much thought at all. Maybe some failure in your past makes you think that God just doesn't want anything to do with you anymore. You're still in His family, but you're the black sheep. Or it's like you're on probation. You've messed up once and if it happens again God is finished with you. So you better stay on your toes so God will be pleased with you and keep loving you. It's easy for that kind of thinking to creep into our minds if we're not careful.

These few verses in Jeremiah 32 reveal the heart of God and the overwhelming activity of God in our behalf. It's not just us trying to keep up with God. God is constantly active in our lives to bring about His glorious purposes for us.

This is called God's New Covenant that He makes with His people where He will forgive their sins and remember them no more. But He will do more than that. God promises to bring about a change in their hearts to actually make it possible for them to be faithful to the Lord.

Now why should Christians in 2017 be interested in what God did with the Jews 2500 years ago? It is because that New Covenant that God made with Israel is ultimately fulfilled in someone very important to us ... Jesus Christ. What God promised to do for them is what God does for us when we are saved by putting our trust in Christ. God sent His one and only Son, Jesus Christ, to completely and perfectly fulfill all of God's righteous requirements for us. Then God gives us the Spirit of His Son to come to live in us, making us new on the inside, changing us forever and making it possible for us to live for and love the Lord in faithfulness.

So let's lean in here so we can understand God's overwhelming activity in our behalf this very moment. It all starts with...

1. GOD'S GRACIOUS MOVEMENT TOWARD US

Most of us have been so influenced by "religion" that we think about God in these terms. We have to chase after Him and somehow prove ourselves to Him. We

know we need Him, but we think that it's all up to us to make ourselves acceptable to Him. That's the spirit of religion. What we don't realize is that the pursuer in this relationship is God. He comes after us. He knows that as hard we try we cannot fulfill His righteous requirements, which is the only way we can have a relationship with Him. So He pursues us ... He graciously moves toward us and promises this:

Jeremiah 32:39a - I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear me...

Jeremiah 32:40b - I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me.

Notice in those two verses the Lord says, "I will ... so that they will." In v.39 the Lord says, "*I will* give them singleness of heart and action, *so that they will* always fear me." And in v.40 the Lord says, "*I will* inspire them to fear me, *so that they will* never turn away."

What I want you to see here is that this is not a matter of us chasing after God hoping He will like us. God is chasing after us ... pursuing us ... moving toward us continuously ... to do something powerful in us. And here is what He is after: To give us singleness of heart and action. He promises to sync up our hearts and our actions. We have a hard time keeping those two things in line. We either have the desire in our heart to do something, but we have trouble getting our actions to follow. Or we go through the motions of the actions, but our heart isn't really in it. Both situations can be really frustrating.

EXAMPLE: It's like the decision to come to church today. There are times when you know in your heart it's the right thing to do, but you find every excuse not to get up, get dressed and show up. And then there are the times you get up, get dressed and show up, but your heart isn't in it and you just go through the motions. Well God moves toward us to sync up our hearts and our actions which becomes incredible fulfilling. Then we see...

2. GOD'S MIGHTY WORK IN US

Notice the great heart-work God intends to do.

Jeremiah 32:39a - I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear me...

Jeremiah 32:40b - I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me.

So God is creating for Himself a people whose hearts (will, purpose, intention) and actions (ways, path) are focused on the fear of the Lord. God doesn't plan to just stand there to see if we will bring ourselves to fear Him. He will take responsibility to so work in our hearts so that we *will* fear Him. Even when we stray, the mighty work that He does in our hearts won't let us stray for long.

Remember this is the big problem in Jeremiah's day. Their hearts were so fickle and unfaithful. They could never be satisfied in God so they were looking for other things to fill their need for security, meaning and happiness. Now God is going to do such a great and gracious work in their behalf that will change their hearts so that they will never want to turn their backs to Him again.

When the Lord puts this worship, reverence and respect for God in our hearts it will serve the purpose of riveting our hearts to Him so that we will never turn away from Him. That doesn't mean that we will never sin; it means that we can't live in sin for long before we repent and turn back to the Lord. The general course of our life will be toward the Lord and not away from Him.

Listen, if you are living away from God ... if your back has been turned to God for some time ... something is terribly wrong. Take this seriously. Repent and turn back to the Lord. If you are saved why in the world would you not want to live without reverence and respect for God?

So God graciously moves toward us to do this mighty work in us. And all of this flows out of...

3. GOD'S GOOD INTENTIONS FOR US

People might think that God is like an abusive father who selfishly demands to be feared by his children. But that's not the heart of our Father. Notice...

Jeremiah 32:39b - They will always fear me for their own good and the good of their children after them.

God wants what is good for us and for our children. Living with this respect and reverence for the Lord insures that the blessings of the Lord will flow toward us for our good and for the good of those we love.

Jeremiah 32:40a - I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them...

It all starts back in v.38 where the Lord says, "I will be your God." He will use all of His wisdom, power and love to see to it that we will always be His people and He will always be our God. That's ultimate security. This is an everlasting arrangement. God will never stop doing us good. Even when we go through the tough times of life, behind it all is a good, good Father.

ILLUSTRATION - I love the lyrics of Chris Tomlin's song that we sometimes sing, "Good, Good Father."

I've heard a thousand stories of what they think you're like
But I've heard the tender whispers of love in the dead of night
And you tell me that you're pleased
And that I'm never alone

You're a good good father
It's who you are, it's who you are, it's who you are
And I'm loved by you
It's who I am, it's who I am, it's who I am

I've seen many searching for answers far and wide
But I know we're all searching
For answers only you provide
'Cause you know just what we need
Before we say a word

You're a good good father
It's who you are, it's who you are, it's who you are
And I'm loved by you
It's who I am, it's who I am, it's who I am.

Now let this next verse just explode your mind and your heart.

Jeremiah 32:41 - I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land with all my heart and soul.

“I will rejoice in doing them good...” Do you understand that all the overwhelming activity of God toward us flows out of His joyful heart that desires and intends to do us good?

Zephaniah 3:17 - The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.”

And v.41 says that God is doing this with all of His heart and soul. Now throughout the Bible we hear God calling us to love and serve Him with all of our heart and soul, but here God does something good for His people with all of His heart and soul. Now just think about that ... something that is done with all the heart and soul of God. We can't comprehend what that means. But let's just try for a moment. Just think of the intensity of the desires you have in your heart and soul. I'm talking about those good desires you have for loving relationships, food, marital intimacy, pleasure, friends, security and all that is stored up in your heart and soul that propels you to act. Multiply that seven billion times over for all the people on the planet today. If you put all that desire into a container and compare it to the desires of the heart and soul of God, it would be comparing a thimble of water to the vast Pacific Ocean. That's how intensely God loves ... how intensely God rejoices in doing good for His people.

You know, there's probably one doxology in the Old Testament that is more prominent than any other. It was the one song that all the priests knew and were to sing. The people sang this song generation after generation. We sang it earlier: “Give thanks to the Lord for *He is good*. His love endures forever.”

God reveals His goodness in the face of His Son Jesus Christ. All of this is accomplished for us in Jesus Christ. And so we get in on the blessings of the New Covenant.

Romans 8:28 - And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Ephesians 1:9 - And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,

Philippians 2:13 - for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

If you're not saved today, why would you want to live outside of the blessings of God's good pleasure? He's not trying to make your life miserable. He wants to do good for you as you put your trust in Christ.

If you're saved, child of God, rejoice and rest in this goodness, even if you are going through hard times today. Worship Him! Give thanks!

Has your heart been hardened toward God? Are you sinning in such a way that you have no fear of God, no respect for God, no qualms with living contrary to the will of God? You need to ask yourself the tough question ... are you saved?