

## Don't Give Up on God

✦ **He still fills heaven and earth (vv.23-24)**

✦ **His Word is still powerful and effective (vv.25-29)**

In the Name of Jesus, God's Word in human flesh and blood, dear family of God:

These days it seems most people who have anything to do at all with church just want to treat it like a pit stop. "Fill my tank. Change the tires. Check my oil. Clean my windshield. Then let me get back on the racetrack of life and forget about God until the next time I need service. Don't call me. I'll stop by when I'm ready, when I feel the need."

Whether it's couples wanting a quick fix for their marriage or a computer techie telling me his life is fine, i.e. "I don't really need church right now," full tummies and bulging closets are hiding the lessons of Jeremiah to his fellow Jews. I reminded the techie, "You really need to charge your batteries before they run out." "I see your point," he answered. But life goes on. Our "time saving" devices keep us so busy! Finally when the tidal wave of God's justice catches up as it did for the Jews in Jeremiah's day, when "life happens," as they say, many drown in despair. They feel God doesn't care. But they're feeling their own cold heart. God is still good. His mercies never fail. **Don't Give Up on God** because...

✦ **He still fills heaven and earth (vv.23-24)**

There are many heroes of faith in the Bible. But one I have never wanted to be is Jeremiah. Come to think of it, faithful pastors and witnessing Christians are in a similar spot. Jeremiah has been called "the weeping prophet." No one would listen to his warnings until the hammer of God's justice finally came down on God's chosen people. Jerusalem was destroyed, the people taken into exile. Considering what God did to His own temple, how can anyone think he'll escape from God's wrath and punishment?

In the previous chapter, Jeremiah 22, the prophet faithfully catalogs the failures of the last four kings of Judah – three sons and one grandson of good King Josiah. So sad that such a faithful king lost the big battle for faith in his family. Fact is, all of Israel's kings finally failed. Then in our chapter Jeremiah describes the failure of the priests and prophets. "Pastor" means "shepherd." Prophets, priests and kings were all called to shepherd God's people. But they failed: *"Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!" declares the LORD. Therefore this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to the shepherds who tend my people: "Because you have scattered my flock and driven them away and have not bestowed care on them, I will bestow punishment on you for the evil you have done," declares the LORD....Both prophet and priest are godless,*" He says. *"They commit adultery and live a lie. They strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns from his wickedness. They are all like Sodom to me; the people of Jerusalem are like Gomorrah....They fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD. They keep saying to those who despise me, 'The LORD says: You will have peace.' And to all who follow the stubbornness of their hearts they say, 'No harm will come to you.'...But if they had stood in my council, they would have proclaimed my words to my people and would have turned them from their evil ways and from their evil deeds."* (Jeremiah 23:1f,11,14,16f,22 NIV84)

If you've ever tried to warn a teenage child about where their conduct is headed, but found only stubborn resistance instead of repentance, then you know a little about how God feels – When husbands and wives point the finger at each other as if they have no sins of their own. When church people shake their heads at the wickedness of others and forget their own sins cry out against them before God day and

night. When pastors shave the truth a little to make their messages more acceptable, more “relevant.” When churches talk about “bad choices,” but fail to show the damning nature of your sins, my sins, every sin of every human for what we think or feel that is unacceptable to God. If God doesn’t like it, it’s sin.

There’s a part of each of us that just wants to hide. Be honest. To realize every thought, word and deed is wide open to God’s holy eyes, that’s scary. One pastor recalled from sermon years ago, “What are some things you never want to hear from God when you come before Him in judgment?” One thing you don’t want God to say would be this: “You were just like everyone else. Your whole life was wrapped up in your own happiness. You were not willing to sacrifice your desires for the good of your wife, your feelings for the sake of your husband, your personal time for the family, your pleasures for the needs of your neighbor.” We’re way too much like the athletes, coaches and fans at the Olympics in Rio. Just as they enjoy wealth and fame with people living in abject poverty only a few yards away, we ignore the broken lives and spiritual poverty all around us. They hype the polluted water for the athletes, but forget the folks who have to drink and bathe in it all the time. What about dying souls all around us who don’t know any better than to drink from spiritual sewers? *“Am I only a God nearby,” declares the LORD, “and not a God far away? Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?” declares the LORD. “Do not I fill heaven and earth?” declares the LORD. Don’t Give Up on God....*

### ✦ His Word is still powerful and effective (vv.25-29)

Sunday School kids can tell you that Adam and Eve tried to hide. He listened to his wife instead of God. She listened to the devil instead of God or her husband. None of us could face the Divine Judge even for a moment without a total meltdown. But here’s the amazing thing about God. He comes looking for us in mercy instead of anger. Just when we know we deserve only wrath, He comes in kindness as the perfect Prophet, Priest and King. All others failed; this God-Man prevailed.

Like a loving shepherd: *“I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number. I will place shepherds over them who will tend them, and they will no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any be missing,” declares the LORD. “The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.”*

God is sick and tired of misleading preachers who plagiarize each others’ lies and promote their own opinions as if they were God’s truth. *“I had a dream! I had a dream!”* you can still hear them saying whether they’re in the Christian community or Native American. They’ve gotten their followers to forget the saving Name-reputation of the LORD, the Savior God. You will not hear them mention the name of Jesus as the only God and certainly not as the only Savior. God says, *“Let the prophet who has a dream tell his dream,”* i.e., “Let them be.” *“But let the one who has my word speak it faithfully.”*

So if you only stop at church for pits and parts, then straw will do. But if you’re like me, craving help for your own stubborn heart, God’s **Word is still powerful and effective**. God breaks down stony pride with the **hammer** of His law. His Word still burns like **fire** at first, but once the dross of sin is removed, it soothes the soul like nothing else. It warms the heart and hands to gladly serve others because that’s how God’s own Son served us as Lord and Savior. *“He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”* (2 Corinthians 5:15)

In another way we should all be like pit crews practicing to waste no time getting their champion back on the track again. Precision is a good thing when you practice repeating what you’ve heard in church and Bible Class in order to be faithful at home with God’s holy Word. All of us should be like those athletes who see no sacrifice as too great when going for the gold. The gold Christ won for us can never be taken away by doping scandals or broken records from new champions. **Don’t Give Up on God**. Your Champion Jesus proves that God never gives up on you. Stay tuned to God’s **Word**. Amen.