

UNREPENTANCE WILL LEAD TO UNBEARABLE CONSEQUENCES

Intro: Have you ever had a crystal clear conversation with a child, or even an adult, that at the end of the conversation it was clear they did not understand you. You ask yourself, “Were they even listening? I said it perfectly clear!” Perhaps you were giving instruction to someone how to operate a device or machinery to which they nodded they understood. After you leave them on their own you look back only to see they didn’t listen very well. So you go back to give a strong visual lesson giving a demonstration. They give you the nod and off you go trusting them to have really gotten it this time. By now you have trust issues so you look back. Ahg! Even with my example they didn’t fully watch. Moments like those you hang your head incredulously. People who don’t really listen and don’t truly open their eyes are very challenging. Kids, have any of you tried to teach your parents how to operate your game controllers or some other complex toy? It doesn’t take long to see them fail like they didn’t hear a word you said. I am pretty sure all of us have been guilty of not seeing and not listening very well. When we don’t slow down and humbly open our eyes to what is around us, and humbly open our ears to what is being said, we will be missing the knowledge, missing wisdom, and missing truth. Worse yet, we will miss the relationship that is being offered us.

Matthew 11:20-24

In today’s passage, we see Jesus continuing to address that generation, a stubborn and prideful people that heard His powerful words, they saw His miracles, and still, they rejected Him. They refused to turn from their sin toward the Messiah. He was speaking to Jewish communities that were zealous of the law, zealous of their traditions. These were the cities that Jesus performed the majority of His miracles. Do you remember the story in Matthew 15 where He answers the Canaanite woman whose daughter was demon possessed, He tells her that He was first sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. His first ministry audience was Israel.

In Matthew 4, prophecy revealed His primary target was to proclaim the Kingdom of heaven to the region of Galilee a location where the people were dwelling in darkness and in the shadow of death. Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, were Galilean cities. The measurable results of Jesus’s ministry in Galilee was poor enough to discourage any missionary sending agency. Did Jesus not pray enough, or not perform enough miracles? How could they have missed the true Messiah? Maybe His messages were too soft or too harsh? I personally think His ministry was perfect and accomplished exactly what He wanted it to, including His death on the cross. We are reminded by

verse 19 of the previous passage, wisdom is justified by her deeds. The fact that 2000 years later we are still seeing people come to Christ is a tremendous evidence of the wisdom of God. What is incredible to me is the ongoing testimonies of people who have had their eyes opened and truly see who Jesus is. Truly see what He has done.

I. Denounce

Well, this is a tough passage that uses some very unfamiliar words. I will explain them as we go but let's spend some time here on verse 20. This verse states clearly what the next four verses are about. Verse 20 starts out with *then*. The use of *then* states there was a slight shift in what Jesus was previously talking about. Last week, Stan explained verses 16-19 where Jesus expounded on His view of that generation. That they were like pouty and petulant children who wouldn't respond to the call to play. He then reveals how poorly that generation thought of John the Baptist and of Himself. Here in verse 20, Jesus shifts from contrasting the generation – (a time frame of people), to cities - (locations of people). This shift narrows his humbling speech to more specific places and groups of people. Jesus *denounces* these cities. To *denounce* is to defame, to rail at, to chide, or taunt. Jesus railed on these cities because, it was these cities that He did the majority of His mighty works. Jesus revealed his power and deity by performing the kind of miracles that were *unprecedented* until that time. As He walked through Galilee, He changed water to wine, fed thousands with five loaves and two fish, healed the sick, healed a mute, healed lepers, cast out demons, gave sight to the blind, gave hearing to the deaf, made the lame whole, calmed the storm, walked on water, withered a fig tree, put an ear back on a man's head, and raised the dead. If you were alive at that time, could you imagine ignoring these miracles? Even if you had not personally witnessed them, there were hundreds if not thousands of people that could attest to their truth. What is very interesting is the reason Jesus is denouncing them is not because they rejected His miracles, it is because they rejected Him, refusing to repent. The Lord Jesus was not trying to create a loyal following to Himself as miracle worker, He was creating a following of Himself as the Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior. The majority of people in these cities refused to turn from darkness toward the light, toward life itself. Listen to Jesus in Luke 5:32, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance". Jesus called on them but these people refused to repent. Our current society rejects the word repent because it demands change, change of direction, humility. The

word repent reveals unacceptance and intolerance. The word represents what God is commanding of sinners, to turn direction, to turn from sinful, selfish pride and towards God in humility. Again, in Acts 17:30, God commands people everywhere to repent. If people continue to reject His call to repent, there has to be consequence. God is just, He is righteous. Rebellion and sin demand consequence. If unrepentance had no ultimate consequence then God would be unjust and His grace and mercy would be cheapened. Mercy would no longer be such a profound attribute of God because who would need mercy if there were no consequences. How fast would the world as we know it completely unravel in chaos, in total anarchy if evil never had consequences?

II. Woe to you!

Can you see repentance is very important, even critical to the Lord Jesus? What does the lack of repentance lead to? What are the consequences of un-repentance?

In verse 21 Jesus states woe to both Chorazin and Bethsaida. He is stating, sorrow and distress are coming your way. A heavy warning. And then in verse 23 He asks Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No you will be brought down to Hades the place where the dead are. Why such harsh language? Why such a rebuke? Let us not forget that God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. The Gospels have many accounts of Jesus speaking harshly to religious hypocrites. Jesus is very strategic as He uses Gentile cities to contrast with the Jewish cities. He chooses pagan cities, known for judgment, known for destruction. To hold against those cities who witnessed Jesus's mighty works. The Jews at that time would have been very familiar with these ungodly cities and had plenty of condescending judgment and even hatred. Tyre and Sidon, now modern day Lebanon, were two pagan cities in ancient Bible times. You may remember Hiram King of Tyre, who had a treaty with David and later with Solomon to provide craftsman and materials. He built David's palace and helped build the first temple in Jerusalem. Many years later these coastal cities would come under judgment due to their pride and their desire to see Israel destroyed. You can find prophecies against Tyre & Sidon in Psalm 83, Isaiah 23, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Isaiah 23 is titled the oracle against Tyre. In this chapter, Sidon is included as well. Isaiah 23:9 states God's purpose was to defile the pompous pride of all glory, to dishonor all the honored of the earth. Tyre and Sidon were full of pride, the pride of glory and honor that are independent from God. Pay attention to this. The Jews knew about the destruction Tyre and Sidon. They

knew it was due to pompous pride against God. Jesus uses two prideful Gentile cities that were destroyed by God to say it will be better for them on the Day of Judgment than for Chorazin and Bethsaida.

Because they beheld the Lord Jesus with their own eyes, they witnessed His shocking miracles, and then rejected Him, their pride had surpassed even the pride of these pagan cities. Jesus further confronts them by saying Tyre & Sidon would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes had they seen His mighty works.

In essence, He states to Chorazin and Bethsaida, "Look, even these pagan cities that were destroyed would have had eyes to see my power and ears to hear my message. So much so they would have humbled themselves in their shame." Capernaum is next on His list. Vs23 And you, Capernaum, do you think you will be exalted to heaven? I could imagine seeing prideful residents of Capernaum listening...eyebrows going up with glib smiles. "Well yes, we *will* be exalted to heaven." False! Without repentance you will be brought down to Hades, hell, to the place of the dead. Now He brings up one of the most notoriously wicked cities of all time. Sodom, a place that was destroyed by sulfur and fire falling from heaven. 2 Peter 2 speaking on false prophets, Peter reminds us of how awful Sodom was, *God condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and turned them into heaps of ashes. He made them an example of what will happen to ungodly people.* When any Jewish residents of Capernaum caught wind of Jesus's words, they would have been so painfully confronted by the use of Sodom against them that they would have been truly humbled to repent, or hardened deeper into their pride. Again, Jesus states if Sodom had seen Jesus, His miraculous works, it would not have been destroyed. This pagan city, so terribly wicked that it had to be completely wiped out, they actually would have repented had they seen Jesus. This would have been so upsetting for the Jews to hear. For all three cities, Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum, they were warned that on the Day of Judgment, they would have it much worse than these destroyed pagan cities.

III. Judgment Day

Jesus and the NT writers reference the Day of Judgment often. They also speak of this day as the day of Lord, His second coming, the great and magnificent day, the day of wrath. The day Jesus Christ is coming back to judge the living and the dead. This will happen at a time that no man knows,

it will come as a thief in the night for most. It is the day where all words spoken and all the deeds of mankind will be revealed. It is a day where Jesus, the righteous judge, will exercise judgment and justice. On this day people who have rejected Jesus will receive their due.

Earlier I referenced Acts 17:30. *Now he commands all people everywhere to repent.* The very next verse states why He is calling all people to repent. *vs³¹ Because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”* Judgment and wrath are coming for the ungodly, for the wicked.

Romans 2:5 states that because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

Isaiah chapter 2 explains that in that day the lofty pride of man will be brought low, and the LORD alone will be exalted. The Lord alone will be exalted.

What about the righteous? I should spend a few moments contrasting the Day of Judgment for believers, those indwelt by the Holy Spirit. 2 Timothy 4:8 states those that love His appearing will be awarded crowns by Jesus, the righteous judge. Will you love His appearing as Lord and Judge? Another unique perspective stated by Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:14, On the day of the Lord, Paul and his co-laborers will boast of the Christians in Corinth and the Corinthians will boast of them.

Saints will be boasting in one another, boasting in what God has done in their hearts. Boasting in how much others love Jesus.

One more aspect for the believer is we can have confidence for the Day of Judgment. Please, allow these three verses in 1 John 4 to encourage you.

16-18 So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. ¹⁷ By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the Day of Judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

Friends, if your thoughts go toward fear while pondering the return of Christ, if you are not confident in your status on Judgment day, please talk to

someone you trust. Talk to an elder or pastor in the church. We would love to speak to you if you don't have peace with God, if you still feel condemned. Scripture says now is the day of salvation. Don't wait another day to be free from your burden of sin. Please don't allow stubborn pride from keeping you from repentance. Turn to God and experience the wonderful peace only He can offer. Heavy warnings in scripture and the thoughts of Judgment Day should increase our fear of the Lord. They should drive us to prayer, drive us to ask God to keep us humble, to open our spiritual eyes, and to give us ears to hear what the Spirit is saying. Each one of us has to find the balance of fearing God and at the same time fully enjoying His love, His grace. In Acts 9:31 we learn how the early church was growing. The church was multiplied when they walked in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit. The fear of the Lord and condemnation are two completely different things. We know there is now no more condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus. However, scripture tells us that God chastens those He loves. He corrects His sheep and is conforming us into the image of His beloved Son. He has given us His Holy Spirit to comfort and guide us into all truth. My prayer today is that we all would truly have eyes to see, and ears to hear, and to walk humbly with our God.

Benediction: Rom 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.