

LOOKING FOR GOOD MEN

Jeremiah 5:1-31

Introduction: College sports is an interesting business. Coaches spend a large part of their off season looking for good athletes/players of the sport they oversee. They are constantly looking for good men who have a commitment to the task of making their team the best. They go through the off season recruiting and looking here and there for players. God established this practice a long time before any coach ever thought of it. God is always looking for good men/women who will stand for honesty and the truth.

We do a foolish thing at Christmas time by telling our children that they had better be nice because Santa Clause is watching them. We seldom consider that we have ascribed to Santa one of the attributes of God, in fact if you examine the current view of Christmas there are several of the attributes of God we have given to Santa. What really bothers me is that we are concerned about our children being aware of some mythical character who does not exist and never has, who might be watching them and they need to adjust their behavior. Why do parents not tell their children that God is aware of everything they do and Santa has a disadvantage, he is not omnipresent in spite of parents trying to convince their children otherwise.

We can be absolutely sure that God is aware of everything we do and even think. Our text is about the observant eye of God on the people who bear His name and His evaluation of their behavior. Did you ever consider that God is watching everything you do and knows your thoughts? This demonstrated in the New Testament. We believe that Jesus was God in the flesh (and still is). While on earth He demonstrated some characteristics that are definitely those of God. In the book of **Matthew** we are told that Jesus took a ship and came "into his own city." Then we read this exchange: **Matthew 9:2-4 (KJV)** ² *And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.* ³ *And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.* ⁴ *And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?* Jesus knew what they thought and then questioned them about why they had evil thoughts in their heart. We seldom consider this attribute of God and think we can get away with things when God is clearly watching and even taking notes. That is what this passage is about. We are not going to read the entire passage but read it as we work through it. I do want to read the first part just to set the tone of the chapter. **READ Jeremiah 5:1-6.**

Jeremiah was sent on a search by God. His assignment was to find "one" person who was honest in his judgment and one who sought the truth of God. That could be in contrast to Abraham who was pleading with God for Sodom in **Genesis 18** and narrowed the search for some *righteous* people and eventually got to *ten righteous people*. Abraham stopped at ten and was satisfied with that

number. God seems to be a bit more lenient with Jerusalem and told Jeremiah to look for “ONE GOOD MAN.” (See **Genesis 18:22-23.**)

I. FINDING FAITHFULNESS, Jeremiah 5:1-6. The key to this passage is the first statement in **verse 1. Jeremiah 5:1 (KJV) Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it.** Jeremiah is told to make a survey through the city of Jerusalem and see if there is any one who “executeth judgment” or that “seeketh the truth.” That is not a huge assignment since the responsibility is to see if there are any one man in the city who is honest and interested in the things of God. That is how I see these two matters. We are seldom aware of the way God is interested in what is going on in the world and especially in our lives. When we say that God is interested in the affairs of man we don’t need to go very far to discover this. Look at **Genesis 6:8 (KJV) But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.** How did God find this out? By observing the lifestyle of Noah. We go a little farther and find that God had a deep interest in the nation of Israel when He took them to the land of Canaan. God told Israel He was taking them to a land that He had interest in and indicated to them this was a land, **Deuteronomy 11:12 (KJV) A land which the LORD thy God careth for: the eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.** God’s eyes are “always” upon that land and its people. We know from **verse 1** that God is looking for two characteristics of a person who will “executeth judgment” and one who “seeketh the truth.” Then we find there are other qualities He is seeking.

A. One who will not feign honesty (“swear falsely”), Jeremiah 5:2. God demonstrates His patience with the sinfulness of man by saying that if He can find someone with the qualities He is looking for He will pardon their sin. Yet their propensity is to “swear falsely.” In other words you cannot trust them. We live in a world where the truth is a premium. I have noticed that the news media has a policy of what they call “fact checkers.” What that is they find a politician telling something to promote their agenda or themselves and make statements about the economy or something they have accomplished and the media will look into their claims to see if they are telling the truth. More times than not the perpetrator of the information had been lying and not telling the truth. There is the policy of telling a “half-truth” to try and veil the false information they have presented. This is called “feigning honesty.” In other words they are trying to look like they are truthful when they are telling lies. God calls this hypocrisy. See **Matthew 23** for Jesus’ assessment of these people. They are very religious but have not desire to be honest.

B. One who will follow the truth, Jeremaih 5:3-4. Notice that God told Jeremiah to look for someone who “seeketh the truth,” **verse 1.** I want

you to look at a verse with me. It is hard to believe this is actually in the Bible but it clearly describes those who reject the truth. => **Job 21:7-15 (KJV)** ⁷ Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? ⁸ Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. ⁹ Their houses *are* safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them. ¹⁰ Their bull gendereth, and faileth not; their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf. ¹¹ They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. ¹² They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. ¹³ They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. ¹⁴ **Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.** ¹⁵ What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him? This demonstrates the attitude of the wicked. They have no desire to know the ways of God and the only place you will find that is in His word and we know that Jesus said in **John 17:17 (KJV)** **Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.**

Did it ever occur that God is scanning the world looking for someone who loves Him and seeks His truth and to be an honest person? The Bible says in **2 Chronicles 16:9 (KJV)** **For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.** Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars. If Since God is looking for you how would He find you? What character qualities would you demonstrate?

- C. One who is a faithful leader, Jeremiah 5:5-6.** Jeremiah went to visit (“get me to”) the great men. He is sure they will know the way of the Lord but he was in for a surprise. The description of these men who were evidently the spiritual leaders of Israel/Judah is very stark. Look back at **Jeremiah 2:8 (KJV)** *The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.* This is what God saw in the spiritual leaders of the people. Jeremiah needed to find this out for himself. Note what it says about them in **Jeremiah 5:5 (KJV)** *I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the LORD, and the judgment of their God: but these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds.* These “spiritual” leaders of the people had decided to break free and do the things they wanted to do and get out of the limitations of following God. They wanted to participate in the things of those around them and be able to participate in the things of the world. They saw their commitment to the Lord as a bondage and a hindrance to them being able to enjoy the things of life they desired to have. The Bible addresses this in **Mark 8:36 (KJV)** *For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole*

world, and lose his own soul? Note what Paul considered in this matter in **Romans 6:16 (KJV)** Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, **his servants ye are to whom ye obey**; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? You have a choice of who you will serve. I have seen preachers who have fallen into sin and eventually left the ministry and have stated that it is good to be free to live the way they wanted to. That is a sad testimony of one who had served the Lord and suddenly saw that as a bondage. I do not see it in that light.

The consequences of a lifestyle of casting off the relationship with God is one of disaster according to **Jeremiah 5:6**. It appears to me that the participants of Christendom have a similar attitude. They want to cast off the restraints of their lifestyle and live the way they want to. They have actually forsaken the ways of God. They have cast off the principles of the word of God in a way that has left them to the ravages of a lifestyle that leaves God out of their thoughts and ways. Did you ever wonder why the New Testament emphasizes the importance of prayer in the individual believer? It is a means of keeping the significance of God in their life.

II. FORSAKING GOD, Jeremiah 5:7-9. God follows the seeking of one who “executeth judgment” and “seeketh the truth” and the description of how Judah saw their relationship with God by asking a question. **Jeremiah 5:7 (KJV)** **How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by *them that are no gods*: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses.** The sad commentary on the heart condition of the people is telling as we see once again the effects of a parent’s behavior on their children. God in His benevolence had taken care of the children and saw that they had the things they needed. Notice the description in the last part of this verse: “**they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses.**” Notice the next verse **Jeremiah 5:8 (KJV)** They were *as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbour's wife*. They had gone after anything that was of pleasure and then woke in the morning wishing for more pleasure.

III. FALSE SECURITY, Jeremiah 5:10-18. The nation had developed a false security. Note in **Jeremiah 5:9** that God has given instructions to go upon the walls and “destroy.” God has become disgusted with the nation and has decided to discipline them. Note what is stated about the defenses they have developed. Look at the statement in **verse 10**, “**...take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord's.**” One of the propensities of man is that they think they are secure and this is based on their own ability. The next verse develops this thought. Note **Jeremiah 5:11 (KJV)** **For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the LORD.** The nation had dealt with God as if He was

not aware their activities. Remember **Jeremiah 5:1 (KJV)** *Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it.* God was aware of their activities but He wanted them to be aware of their ways. They had dealt *treacherously* with God. In other words they had been deceptive in the way they lived. They had been deceitful in their dealings with God. The word *treacherous* has an interesting origin. It means “to cheat or trick” and this is done by deception. An illusionist will make you think he can do magic tricks but he does it by deception. He does it in a way that you cannot discern the way he is able to perform the trick. What is interesting about an illusionist is that to be good at what he does he has to practice over and over to perfect the act. People think they can do the same with God but they fail to recognize that God not only knows the things they do but the motive and the thinking behind the behavior.

When the works of one’s hands is the basis of what they think is pleasing to God, this builds a *false security* in the relationship with God. Any *works oriented* religion does this. When our relationship with God and our idea of eternal life is based on what we do, our works, then we have a security. One of the interesting things about the belief of *Purgatory* by the Roman Catholic Church is this very matter. I found this definition which is not designed to be critical but to be sure we know the truth. The Catholic Church sees Purgatory as: “...an intermediate state after physical death in which those destined for heaven ‘undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.’ Only those who die in the state of grace but have not in life reached a sufficient level of holiness can be in Purgatory, and therefore no one in Purgatory will remain forever in that state or go to hell” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purgatory>). Now what does that tell us? They see a person’s “righteousness” as the determining factor as to whether they go to Purgatory. In other words they see one’s lifestyle as a factor of determining whether the deceased has enough “righteousness” (good works) to avoid Purgatory. Now here is something that is very interesting. The Catholic Church sees Purgatory as a “cleansing by way of painful temporal punishment, which like the eternal punishment of hell, is associated with the idea of fire” (*Ibid*).

From what I see this provides for the people who accept this teaching of the RCC are accepting a “false sense of security.” The interesting matter of this is that no one knows how long a person stays in Purgatory. Look again at our text. **Jeremiah 5:10 (KJV)** *Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy; but make not a full end: take away her battlements; for they are not the LORD'S.* Battlements are protective devices designed to shoot through. It is a type of “false front” which eventually became decorative and had very little to do with fighting the enemy. They provided a false sense of safety from the enemy. This can bring a person or nation to a certain defeat.

Baptists are not above developing things that provide a “false sense of security.” For instance, there are many who believe all you have to do is believe in Jesus, pray a prayer and you are sure of heaven. That is why we have host of people who think they are saved and give no indication they know the Lord. There is a difference in “believing in Jesus” and “believing on Jesus.” Note with me this verse: **Romans 10:9 (KJV)** *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.* The belief “in” something here is the truth. We must believe in the truth about Jesus Christ and here it is the matter of the “resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Yet we need to realize that to access this matter of salvation we need to *believe on Jesus*. Do you know what it means to *believe*? The official definition is “to have confidence in the truth, the existence, or the reliability of something...” (www.dictionary.reference.com/browse/believe). In the case of the New Testament belief is to be in the truth about Jesus Christ, that He was who the Bible indicates He is and that the testimony of the Bible gives us the criteria for saving faith. **Acts 16:31 (KJV)** *And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.* Again in **1 John 5:13 (KJV)** *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*

IV. FAILURE TO FEAR GOD, Jeremiah 5:19-24. Look at our text in **Jeremiah 5:20-24 (KJV)** ²⁰ *Declare this in the house of Jacob, and publish it in Judah, saying,* ²¹ *Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not: ²² 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? ²³ But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone. ²⁴ 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.* One of the characteristics of the “Environmentalists” of today is the very same thing. They do not acknowledge God in their hearts and do not give credit for the fact that we can live in a certain degree of tranquility because of God’s restraining hand on things like the sea. He holds it back so we do not drown in it raging. He also gives rain “in His season.” Israel and Judah had forgotten where they came from and how they got to where they were. They had forgotten the blessings that God had given them and turned to false gods who could not speak, walk, or hear. It is my conclusion that we have done a similar thing.

One of the important aspects of a relationship with God is to understand the fear of God. The Proverbs says that the “fear of God is the beginning of wisdom” (**Psalms 111:10; Proverbs 9:10**). There are some

interesting things about the fear of God found in the Bible that we should consider. When Abraham went toward Egypt and encountered Abimelech he told him a lie about Sarah his wife. He told Abimelech she was his sister. Do you know why Abraham did this? **Genesis 20:11 (KJV)** *And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake.* He thought the people did not fear God and had no problem with taking Abraham's life for Sarah. That is not an excuse to lie but it does say some things about the "fear of God." When people do not fear God then they do not have any value in the lives of others and do what is necessary to get what they want. This is a characteristic of our society today. People have no moral values based on the Bible because they do not fear God. People today believe they can do what they want without fear of retribution. In fact crime is on the dramatic increase because people do not fear retribution even from the government. Lawlessness is the order of the day. We find the book of Revelation giving us why we should "fear God." **Revelation 14:7 (KJV)** *Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.*

There are some character qualities that accompany the "fear of God." **Exodus 18:21 (KJV)** *Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.* Notice here that when Moses was instructed to seek men who "fear God" they would have certain characteristics. They would be "men of truth" and they would "hate covetousness." These are things that matter to God in evaluating a person's character.

What is interesting about the Law of Moses is that it lays out a significant relationship between the "fear of God" and obedience to His commandments. Note with me: **Deuteronomy 13:4 (KJV)** *Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.* To the Israelite reading the law of God would cause them to fear God, **Deuteronomy 17:19 (KJV)** *And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them.* There is a definite connection with knowing what God has said, a desire to be complicit with the commands and the fear of God. We should remember what is stated in **Ecclesiastes 12:13 (KJV)** *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.* Can it be determined if you are depending on a "false security" that is not based on the word of God?

- V. FOUND, WICKED MEN, Jeremiah 5:25-29.** This point needs very little comment. Our text begins with **Jeremiah 5:1 (KJV)** *Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the*

broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be *any* that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it. There was a call to make a search for a good man in the city. None were found. Yet when we come to this section we find the wrong kind of person was found. Look at **Jeremiah 5:25-26 (KJV)** ²⁵ Your iniquities have turned away these *things*, and your sins have withholden good *things* from you. ²⁶ **For among my people are found wicked men:** they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men. It is a sad commentary on the people who claim to belong to the Lord as being “wicked.” Note the qualities of these type of people. (1) They have houses “full of deceit.” This indicates that not just the men are that way, but the entire family. A man who deceives will breed deceit. Since this is Father’s Day can I ask you fathers, what are you teaching your children? What do they emulate? There has to be a connection between our lifestyle and the fruit of our life as seen in our children. I know there must be a point where children are responsible for their actions but what are they taught by their parents? (2) The refuse to recognize the plight of the fatherless and the needy (**Jeremiah 5:28**). This is an indication that their focus is on themselves. God indicates that He will not allow this to go unnoticed. **Jeremiah 5:29 (KJV)** Shall I not visit for these *things*? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

VI. FALSE PROPHETS, Jeremiah 5:30-31. These two verses are somewhat of a climax. What determines if a people or a nation follows the dictates of God’s word – men of God who handle what God has said? When you look at what is said there seems to be little difference in what was going on in Jeremiah’s day and what we find in the churches today. Notice that the “prophets prophesy falsely” and the “priests bear rule by their means.” What this means is that they are doing nothing according to what God has said. It is all according to what they want and not what God wants. The capstone to these two verses though is the statement, “*my people love to have it so*” (**Jeremiah 5:31**). This should remind us of **2 Timothy 4:3 (KJV)** For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, **having itching ears**. Our “religious” world is filled with men and women who are in the category of “false prophets.” Jesus warned of these people in **Matthew 7:15 (KJV)** Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Again He pointed out that in the “last days” **Matthew 24:24 (KJV)** For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect. One of the matters that moves people away from the truth is the promoting of false teaching and doctrine. We must be warned and vigilant.