

## IS IT NOTHING TO YOU?

"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." Lamentations 1:12.

Jeremiah was a sad and solitary prophet of God in the midst of a corrupt and sinful nation which was rushing on to its ruin. His heart was broken by the wickedness of the people of his generation. His soul was so burdened with the sins of his people that he has been called "the weeping prophet." Very likely the people thought of Jeremiah as a well-meaning and good man, but a lone calamity howler who specialized in messages on hard times. One can imagine them saying, "Why can't Jeremiah be normal like the other preachers and prophesy unto us smooth things, healing slightly the hurt of the daughter of the people saying, 'peace,' when there is no peace?"

Jeremiah knew which way the wind was blowing, so to speak. He saw God writing the doom of Jerusalem in box-car letters across the sky. He was grieved as he looked upon the careless multitudes and thought about the judgment which was sure to come to them. Warning the people of what was forthcoming, this brave, magnetic and mighty prophet preached, prophesied, and pleaded with them to get right with God.

Because the people ignored God or rebelled against Him, judgment had come upon the city of Jerusalem. The fact that the city had been destroyed may not mean much to you. But, this city is mentioned more times in the Bible than any other. It is the very center of the world geographically. It is a city which has been greatly loved. The Jews loved it devotedly, and it was home to them. It was the city to which they turned when they prayed. It was dearer to them than honor or life itself. It was a city which was highly favored. No other city has ever been favored so greatly. In the Old Testament days the Temple was there. The mercy seat, which was the very center of all the design of redemption, and the place where the atoning, cleansing blood was sprinkled, was there. On many occasions the feet of Christ walked up and down the streets. He taught in the temple there. He performed miracles on the streets. It was at Jerusalem that He was crucified.

Furthermore, Jerusalem was a city which was subjected to severe punishment on various occasions. There is no other city in all the history of the human race where the wrath and judgment of God have fallen like they did there. If you would read its history, you would see that many different nations have controlled it. Many times it has been destroyed, then built back, only to be destroyed again.

When you read the book of Lamentations, you will be reading about the tragedies of that city. It is pictured as a widow who has lost her husband. It is pictured as children whose father has died. It is a desolate place, like a wilderness. The Temple was destroyed, the walls were leveled to the ground, and the soil was plowed and salted. People standing around, looking upon that desolation, were weeping.

Previously the beautiful and beloved city was the pride and joy of every Jew, but now it lay in desolation and the people themselves were in despair. The Temple, which had been erected by Solomon at a cost of millions of dollars, had been destroyed, and all that was of any value therein had been carried away by the Babylonians. The city had

been overrun and pillaged by the invaders. The youth had been beaten and enslaved. Many of the people and the princes had been carried away into captivity. The surrounding nations rejoiced at her downfall, and gloried in her humiliation. The people who passed by looked upon the ruins as just those of another capital city that had been ransacked. Like a widow bereaved and lonely, with tear-stained face and fading beauty, the inhabitants cried out to all who passed by, "Is it nothing to you?"

This judgment came as a result of stubborn rebellion. The people were crying out, saying to the passers-by, "Look at our suffering and look at our distresses, and do not forget that this is a warning of the certainty with which God punishes those who rebel against Him." Each succeeding generation must not forget that Jerusalem in the days of Jeremiah stands as a warning marker, warning us of the certainty and the swiftness with which God sends judgment upon the people who persist in their rebellion.

Never was a city more favored than Jerusalem had been. She was the chosen seat of divine grace. In her Temple stood the mercy seat. High privileges of revelation descended upon her sons. God had spoken to the people through Isaiah, and had sung to them through David. They had tasted of the best favors of God. Now this loss of divine favor galled the people.

There is certainly a parallel here between the United States and Jerusalem twenty-five hundred years ago. Was ever a nation more favored than the United States? God has greatly favored America not only by giving wealth to her people, but by passing on to us the foundation so well laid by our forbears. We have a great light which the whole world needs. Too many of us are stifling it under a half-bushel measure with blindness, lethargy, love for ease, worldliness, and indifference. Great light, great favors, and great advantages are always accompanied by great responsibilities. The greater the privilege, the greater the responsibility. Every individual, city, and nation is accountable to God for the advantages and opportunities which He gives unto them. If one shirks his responsibility, it will be at a great personal cost. By their iniquities the inhabitants of Jerusalem brought their fate upon their heads. The vengeance of God fell upon the apostate city and the rod of correction was applied to her with heavy strokes.

When Jeremiah beheld that ancient and glorious city besieged by her adversaries, invaded by fierce armies, and given over to murder, to plunder, to fire, and to desolation, and her glorious temple defiled and laid in ashes, it is no wonder that he wept and expected others to do likewise.

The taunting shouts of the conquering hosts mingled with the moanings of the conquered. The arrogance of the despoiler was almost unbelievable; to the sensitive soul of the stricken patriot it seemed incredible that human beings could be so calloused. In his frenzied grief Jeremiah cried out, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, where-with the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger."

The callousness and indifference which characterized the people in the day of Jeremiah were very similar to the callousness and indifference in the lives of the people in the days of Christ, for we are told that "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11). Those who were living then might well have been asked, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?"

Look at the physical sufferings of our Lord. They buffeted His face until it was marred terribly. It does not take much to discolor a face, to make it black and blue, and when we remember that there were hatred, malice, envy and strife behind the blows, we can easily see how His face must have been pounded by those who hated Him. There was also the pulling out of His beard, when He did not withhold His face from shame and spitting. There was also the scourging by the Roman lictors, when His back had long furrows made upon it. There was the crown of thorns forced down upon His brow, the piercing of His hands and feet with the nails, the tearing of His flesh when the cross was dropped into the hold with a thud, the indescribable thirst during the weary hours of anguish that He hung upon the cross, and the plunging of the spear into His side after He had died. "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by" and see Him hanging on that cruel cross?

Think of the mental sufferings of our wonderful Lord, due to the shame and humiliation through which He was called to pass. While He was being crucified between two robbers, they taunted and jeered Him. And yet Christ in silence endured the cross and despised the shame in order that He might bring us to God.

Of all His sufferings those in the spiritual realm were the greatest. It was the removal of the Father's smile, the break in the communion which the Father and He had had from eternity past, that caused Him such anguish of soul. His greatest sufferings lay in the fact that by the sins of others He had been driven outside the Father's favor and had been forsaken by Him at the hour of His greatest need. That was why He cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" "Is it nothing to you" that Christ endured all of these sufferings and anguish for you? Christian, what do the sufferings of Christ mean to you? What difference has that cross made in your life? To Paul the cross of Christ was the great divide. It separated all of his former, sinful life from him. "Is it nothing to you" that Christ died? What transforming power has the cross of Christ exercised upon your character? What difference has it made in your aims, or in your manner of life? How has it changed you?

At this hour we are living in the midst of a nation that bears all the characteristics of the times of Jeremiah. In the light of the current evil thoughts, carnal desires, unholy lusts, and moral collapses, with so many people groping in darkness, reeling in drunkenness, and groveling in the grossness of animal appetites, it would seem that a generation living on the edge of such a world-wide volcano could scarcely sleep at night for fear of the coming day. But, on the contrary, the world rushes madly by as it did in the days of the weeping prophet. In the midst of the world confusion we would cry to a generation of indifferent passers-by, "Is it nothing to you?" Multitudes know little about what is wrong and care even less.

Is it nothing to you that our world is spiritually blind? People are religious, but their religion consists largely of worshiping things and deifying some man or men. Crime and delinquency grip the United States. The world is not only in spiritual blindness, but it is in rebellion against God. Indifference is everywhere. Men brazenly defy God. Materialism is the god of the twentieth century. There are millions in the United States who say that they hate communism, but they are as dangerously materialistic as the communists. One is as devastating as the other. What is

to be said about the prospects in the foreseeable future? "Is it nothing to you" that two-thirds of the members of the churches of the United States are utterly indifferent to the Lord's work?

One of the wicked and tragic sins of church members today is that of indifference, the sin of casualness about the things of God. It is terrible to be complacent while those about you are going to hell. "Is it nothing to you" that you live for self, just as if Christ had never lived and had never died? Is the coldness of your own heart nothing to you? If any professing Christian has any concern about the salvation of others, he will talk to them personally about their need of Christ. If he does not say anything to an unsaved friend or acquaintance about the salvation of his soul, that is positive proof that this all-important matter means nothing to him. Is the condition of lost sinners nothing to you?

Reader's Digest carried a beautiful and wonderful story some time ago. It is a true story. It illustrates what I am talking about, this thing of compassion, tenderness, and love.

There was a man who advertised in the paper that he had five puppies for sale. One day a little boy came to his door and said, "I would like to see the puppies." So they looked at four of the puppies. The little boy said, "I would like to buy one."

The man said, "How much money do you have?" The boy said, "I have a dollar and sixty-eight cents."

The man said, "Well, son, these puppies are registered puppies. We get twenty-five dollars apiece for them."

The little boy scratched his head and looked at his little pile of change and put it back in his pocket. He said, "Mister, have you already sold one?"

He said, "No, I haven't sold one. There is one that I doubt if anyone will want. He is a three-legged puppy. He has one little crippled leg. It will always be crippled." The little boy said, "Could I see it?"

He brought the little three-legged puppy, with just a little appendage hanging where the fourth leg should have been. It went hopping across the floor on three legs. The little boy said, "Mister, would you take \$1.68 for that one?"

The man said, "Yes, I was going to give it away if anyone would take it." The little boy said, "I don't want you to give it to me. I want to buy it. I will give you all that I have for it."

He gave him \$1.68 and started out the door. The man said, "Wait a minute. There is something about you that made you love a little crippled pup. What is it?"

The little boy pulled up his trouser leg and there was a brace up to his knee. He said, "I am crippled too. You did not notice me limping as I came in. That is why I love this puppy."

Unsaved friend, is your destiny nothing to you? You are going to spend eternity, in one of two places — heaven or hell. Because God wants you to have an eternal home in heaven, He has provided a Saviour for you and pleads with you to trust Him and be saved. Are the workings of the Holy Spirit nothing to you? Is the wonderful provision of God for your salvation nothing to you?