



**PENN FREE METHODIST
CHURCH BIBLE STUDY**
15th March 2017
Jeremiah 6:10

**KEY TO
THE LAYOUT
OF THIS STUDY**

**The verses being
studied are in
bold type**

*Supporting and
illustrative Scripture
texts are in italics*

The explanation and
commentary on the
verses being
studied and of the
supporting texts are
in normal typeface

**COME TO CHRIST
BEFORE
YOU ARE
HARDENED
BEYOND
REMEDY**

v10. “To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken”. In this verse we have the anguish of a Gospel preacher whose words are ignored. So few of Jeremiah’s countrymen are willing to heed his solemn warnings. Is there anyone left, he says, who will listen? He is ministering to Judah in the years prior to the Babylonian captivity. This was a period of great national departure from God, when the nation’s unique spiritual inheritance was being ignored, God’s commandments were being flouted, and many were following the false gods of the surrounding nations. Despite all this rebellion, the people deceived themselves into thinking that they were still under the protection of Jehovah, the God of Israel. This shows how possible it is to be outwardly religious, whilst at the same time denying by one’s lifestyle and beliefs the true faith.

v10. "... behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it". How Jeremiah is grieved that there is a nationwide rejection of the authority of God's word. There are many parallels between Judah in Jeremiah's time and our own land today. Judah had been privileged to have received the fullest possible revelation of God's truth. Likewise, Britain has known a wonderful exposure to Gospel light, especially between between, say, the years 1500 and 1850, and even beyond then. Yet today there is a general ignorance of the Scriptures, and many are offended at any clear declaration of God's moral law, and at any suggestion that God judges sin. Many are shocked at the suggestion that there is a God who may even express His gracious warnings about a nation's sins through His control of the climate. The general attitude is that no one should hold such crude and primitive beliefs in enlightened modern Britain.

For along time now in our land the word of the Lord has been a reproach to many. They are ashamed of it. By the second half of the 19th century the Biblical faith began to be seriously undermined by two major philosophical movements. The first was Darwinianism, which attacked the Genesis account of man's origins some 6000 years ago by a direct act of immediate creation. Evolutionary theory created doubt in men's minds about the trustworthiness and infallible inspiration of Scripture, and an intimidated church tried desperately to harmonise evolution and the Bible. the task, however, is impossible, for the whole of Scripture assumes Adam to be an historical person and a six day creation to be historical fact.

The second great undermining of the authority of the Bible in the 19th century came from a theological movement known as 'higher criticism', which emanated from the universities of Germany. This movement rejected the doctrine of the Bible's direct verbal inspiration, even though our Lord and the apostles clearly taught such inspiration. The higher critics argued, and still do argue, that Scripture cannot be regarded as God's authoritative word, but only that it may contain God's word in places alongside material that is fallible and mistaken. This movement has managed to exert an enormous influence across the denominational spectrum. With it has come theological liberalism, which argues that doctrine evolves and adjusts with the times. As a result the 20th century, and the first years of the 21st century, have witnessed continual submission by churches to the philosophical fashions of an unbelieving society. As Biblical truth has been diluted, so has society become increasingly hardened to the reception of the Gospel.

Just as men in Jeremiah's day deluded themselves that they were still being faithful to God, so many today believe that they are Christians, even though they reject much that is essential to the Biblical revelation. Much contemporary Christianity has become a mere mirror image of the trendy humanistic philosophies of secular liberalism. So we, as Jeremiah, are faced with people who are just not willing to listen.

v10. "To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it". So, laments Jeremiah, the great majority of the people has turned from God. The generality of society has rejected God's word, and people, being like sheep, have a tendency to follow the crowd.

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat : Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13,14). Many prefer to be friends with the world than to go down the narrow path of following Christ. The true Gospel is not pleasing to the unregenerate mind. The natural man needs to have his understanding illuminated by the Holy Spirit in order to receive

the Gospel, but many reject the Spirit's gracious drawing work.

"Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14). The rejection of the Biblical Gospel has always been the way of the majority. It is only those few who respond in repentance and faith who are chosen by God unto everlasting life. Man, because he has a fallen nature, far more readily resists the grace of God than submits to it, such is his folly.

v10. "... Their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken". Let us note the particular way in which Jeremiah describes the people of his day. He says that they cannot hear the truth, because their ear is uncircumcised. It is as if their ears are covered with a layer of flesh, so that no sound can enter in. Now those whom Jeremiah was addressing were physically circumcised, and set store great store by that ceremony. Because they were descended from Abraham, and circumcised as a mark of this descent, they were convinced that they were the true people of God; but they had forgotten that the circumcision in their flesh was no more than an outward sign. What they really needed was an inward circumcision, a cutting away of the corruption within their sin-loving hearts. They did not have hearts which loved the word of God.

v10. "... the word of the Lord is become unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it". The people actually treated God's word with contempt. They dismissed Jeremiah's warnings of coming judgement. They preferred the gentler message of the false prophets who spoke only of peace. How like our own day this is. This last week, last Tuesday, on Thought for the Day on Radio 4, the Bishop of Norwich openly declared that "sin does not lead God to be angry". This statement is an open contradiction of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. The very next verse in our passage here, for example, speaks of "the fury of the Lord". We have reached a sorry impasse in our land today where the people are only told what they want to hear. So it is true of our society that it has "**uncircumcised ears**", impervious to God's truth. We are even told in v10 that the people of Judah cannot hearken". They simply lack the ability to receive God's word. This is because they have so hardened themselves against God that He is now ceasing to strive with them, and is giving them up to their blindness.

"God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear" (Romans 11:8). So wrote Paul of his unbelieving countrymen in his day. Those who do not want to hear God's word risk being chastised by God by actually losing the ability to hear, for it is only His grace which enables us to hear in the first place. Our Lord's use of parables teaches us this reality.

(The Lord's disciples), "Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given" (Matthew 13:10-11). Our Lord deliberately spoke in parables to prevent His stubborn and hard-hearted hearers from understanding the truth. He actually employed parables, which were less direct than plain speech, to obscure the truth from those who were persistently unwilling to receive it. This was an act of judgement.

"But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him" (John 12:37). One would have thought that the sight of all our Lord's mighty miracles during His earthly ministry would have produced an immediate positive response from the people, but it was not so. Because of their hardheartedness, the Lord was giving them up to blindness. This is seen as that passage from John 12 continues.

"Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said ... He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and

be converted, and I should heal them” (John 12:39-40). The people made themselves unworthy of receiving further truth, and God Himself hardened their hearts to make them impervious to His light. Likewise in Jeremiah’s day, God was making the people unable to hear, because they had so much resisted the grace whereby they could have understood, had they wanted to. So those today who keep on rejecting the Gospel are risking God’s judicial blinding of their ears and hearts, so that they are simply no longer capable of ever coming to the truth. Paul speaks of this in Romans 1.

“Even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind” (Romans 1:28). How urgently, then, must hearers of the Gospel make use of their day of grace, and come to Christ while there is opportunity.

v10. “... Their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken”. So the outward circumcision of the Jews in Jeremiah’s day was of no help to them, for there was no corresponding inward circumcision of their hearts. Outward religion, church attendance, partaking of sacraments, holding politically correct attitudes, supporting charities - none of these things can help a man in his relationship with God. The sinner needs to be inwardly changed. He needs circumcised ears, which delight in hearing the truth.

“He is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh : but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit” (Romans 2:28-29). Again we see Paul’s emphasis on an inward change. Has a man repented of sin from the heart? Has he received the Holy Spirit and so been born anew? Does he now love God’s Law, desiring to serve him in all holiness of life? Does he delight to hear God’s word, whether it talks of God’s love or of God’s judgement? The people of Jeremiah’s day were outwardly circumcised, but they had uncircumcised ears, as if there were flesh over the ear’s opening. They refused to hear God’s truth. Even when He was giving them the grace to hear and understand, they refused, and now they cannot hear. We are reminded of the Lord weeping over Jerusalem.

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” (Matthew 23:37).

v10. “To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it”. Here is a reminder that a whole nation can become hardened to God’s truth and contemptuous of His word. As each day passes, men confirm one another in their rejection of Christian truth. As each day passes the normality of rejecting Biblical teaching becomes more and more ingrained. That is why it is so necessary for true believers to speak out and to be salt and light, to be a necessary preservative, before the hardening and corruption of society become complete. We find this concept of uncircumcised ears in the New Testament, on the lips of Stephen, just before his martyrdom. He said to those who were about to murder him :

“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost” (Acts 7:51). We see here that the great tragedy was that the Holy Ghost had been graciously drawing these wicked men to abandon their sin and come to faith in Christ. They could have repented by God’s grace. Their uncircumcised ears, initially, were operable. They could have heard and understood - but they refused. There is, then, an urgency about coming to Christ, before the hardness of both ear and heart becomes beyond all remedy.

Therefore the Gospel urgently declares, *“To day if ye will hear (God’s) voice, harden not your hearts” (Hebrews 4:7).*