

James T. Jeremiah  
The Path of the Just  
January 6, 1976

Transcript

James T. Jeremiah:

Well, first of all, today, we want to welcome you. Some of you are here for the first time, some of you are returning and it's always nice to find out who the new and returning students are. So let's have the new and returning students stand, would you do that? How many are here in this group? Are they all in the last? Let me see, stand up, anybody else? Okay, let's give them a hand.

James T. Jeremiah:

I hope you had a good vacation and you're happy to be back and go to work. There's always somebody to spoil the day isn't there? We had a wonderful vacation, during the vacation time we had a new grandson. I have a son by the name of James, and now we have James the third. Trying to keep up with the Smiths. Well, you're worse than the first audience. Anyhow, I have ceased being a prophet, I'm now a patriarch. We have 8 grandchildren and we're glad. I'd like to direct your attention today to a portion of scripture in the book of Proverbs. We used to have a Dean here in the college years ago, Dr. Maddox, one of the things I remember about him is that he used to read the book of Proverbs every month. He took a chapter a day and it fits into every month of the year.

James T. Jeremiah:

You may have a couple of months when there a chapter two leftover, but you can always read a little more then, at that particular time, but it's a good book for every Christian and particularly it's good for Christian young people. Let me read beginning with verse 14, chapter 4, "Enter not into the path of the wicked and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it and pass away. For they sleep not, except they have done mischief and their sleep is taken away unless they cause some to fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness, drink the wine of violence.

James T. Jeremiah:

But The path of the just is like the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is like darkness. They know not at what they stumble." I've been thinking about a verse for this morning, first day of the new quarter and first chapter of the new year. And I don't know of a better one that I could give you than this one, verse 18, "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Use it, think about it. Maybe you'd like to use it as a little bit of encouragement along the way, between now and the quarter exams. In this particular scripture, there are two classes of people stated, mentioned. One is the wicked, the other is the righteous. In fact of the matter is this portion of scripture classifies all humanity. There are only two kinds of people, the wicked and the righteous, the sinners and the saved, the lost and the justified.

James T. Jeremiah:

And in this scripture, the spirit of God through the one who wrote this text makes it clear that never the twain shall meet. There is to be a separation between the godly and the ungodly. The first Psalm makes that clear, as you recall, and this particular scripture classifies all humanity in these two groups. Today in this audience, you are in one or the other.

James T. Jeremiah:

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But you say, I'm in a Christian college. I am from a Baptist church. My father is a deacon. My daddy is a preacher. Well, all of that's fine, but you can be in the home of the righteous in wickedness. You can be in a Christian school in sin. You can walk with the redeemed and be journeying to hell.

James T. Jeremiah:

God doesn't have a grey color here or in first John or in many other places of the word of God on one side or the other, we are today. Now he tells us very clearly as believers that we're not to enter into the path of the wicked. We're not to go on the way of evil men, not to pass by, or we are to pass by their way. The way of the wicked is like darkness. It gives a pretty good description of what wickedness is all about. Now someone says it's inconceivable that people could be in a Christian school, want to come to a Christian school who aren't saved. Periodically, as I mentioned before, some people ask me if, does anybody ever gets saved at Cedarville College? And I always reply, yes, most of them are Baptists who get saved. I think one of the tragedies of fundamentalism, of conservative Bible believing churches, is that we have a tendency to grow up with the language without having an experience with Jesus Christ.

James T. Jeremiah:

We know the terms, we know the way that we ought to go and we know the theology, but somewhere along the line, we've missed knowing the Savior. This was brought forcefully to my attention, this last week. I had a letter from a former student who was among us, not so long ago. He's asked me to speak about this. So I'm doing it. And I'm not going to tell you his name. I don't think this would be particularly necessary nor helpful. When I read some of the things on this letter, you'll probably know who it is. I don't know.

James T. Jeremiah:

But this young man was here in college, comes from a fundamental Bible believing church. I know the pastor very well, godly man and a godly people. But this boy was a long way from God. He wasn't saved. He admits it. He was asked to leave. He was requested to leave. He was dismissed and rightly so. Though at the time when the matter was presented to him, he did what a lot of people do when they're caught in their sin, he added one more to it, tried to lie his way around it. But now something's happened to him. He said, during my stay at your school, I was involved in the use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs.

James T. Jeremiah:

I was unsaved and completely in the wrong. He said, I tried to disobey every rule that the college stood for. I was rebellious. After the college dismissed him, he went home, he said, continued in my sinful ways with drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. I caused even my parents to reject me. They kicked me out of the home and I began to drift around the country. I hitchhiked for 4 months, ending up in Missouri, in the town Missouri, where I got married. And several weeks later robbed the bank. Goes on to tell us that he is waiting for sentence in a jail in Kansas city.

James T. Jeremiah:

It has one bright note in it. When he found himself in jail, he met a black man who had been saved there. And this black boy led him to Christ. Tells about getting on his knees, acknowledging his sin and asked the Lord to save him. One of the things he asked for in writing was to be forgiven for what he'd done. Of course, we, any of us rejoice in the opportunity of doing that. I trust you'll pray for him. God will deal with his life. You see, the unfortunate part about all of this is that though he is now born again,

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according to his own testimony on the way to heaven, there is nothing in this world that can be done, nothing, to erase the black marks against his life. You don't, in spite of the horrible lawless situation we have in this country, in our land, in our world, you don't just erase conviction for bank robbing. You don't just wipe off all the effects of dope and alcohol.

James T. Jeremiah:

We must remember that sin has some incurable consequences. I knew a man several years ago, who was saved incidentally in the Missouri prison. He was an evangelist. I can tell you some interesting stories about this fellow, but he got saved later in life. Then he went to preach, but the marks of sin were there.

James T. Jeremiah:

I'm saying this in the light of what part of this text says today, but the ways of the wicked, are not to be the ways of the child of God. It's impossible for you to be a Christian or for me to be a Christian and be what we ought to be for God and walk in the ways of the wicked, follow the ways of sin. It doesn't make any difference, whether we're out in the world in a carousing atmosphere, or whether we are in a so-called protected atmosphere within a Christian college. And the wages of sin is not only death, the wages of sin involve some suffering in this life.

James T. Jeremiah:

But the positive side of all of this in the Christian life is that the path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. And I hope we will take that as our motto. And when we are walking in that pathway, we do not, cannot walk in the pathway of a wicked. You can't walk two directions at the same time. You are either walking with God or walking in sin. And I trust today, as you begin a new quarter and as you begin a new year, that somehow the spirit of God will get hold of our hearts and help us to recognize every one of us, administrators, faculty, teachers, students, that the way that pleases God is the way that follows the path of the righteous.

James T. Jeremiah:

This particular scripture involves a spiritual enlightenment or spiritual beginning. Refers to the shining light. That seems to speak to me of the fact that when you become a Christian, God enlightens you. You do not walk the path of righteousness without spiritual enlightenment. The Lord Jesus says, he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. When we are enlightened, spiritually, we come face to face with sin and its awful consequences. Tragically, we are finding people today who are making profession of faith in Christ, excuse me, who have never come face-to-face with the reality of their sin. They have a concept that sort of saying hello to Jesus. Sort of saying a nice thing about the Bible and having some kind of an experience that isn't based in biblical fact and they never faced the reality of sin. Spiritual enlightenment always brings us to the reality of sin.

James T. Jeremiah:

It brings us also to the Savior and His compassion and to the reality of salvation as a personal experience. And then the challenge of being enlightened to follow the Lord in His service. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness said Jesus, but shall have the light of life. Have you today been spiritually enlightened, spiritually quickened so that you can walk the pathway of the righteous. It isn't the pathway for the wicked. And you do not walk the pathway of the righteous without spiritual

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enlightenment. I like to think of this pathway as a safe walk, the path that He has chosen, for the word of God says, the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord and He delighteth in his way. I used to think this meant that the child of God delighted in the Lord's way, but I like to believe as I read this text, that it means just this, the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord and God delighteth in the way of that man, whose steps are ordered by Him. Think of it, saving poor wicked sinners like we are, giving us the privilege of walking the path of the righteous. Then delighting in the path we follow in obedience to Him. He delights in that. You want to make God happy? You want to make him delighted? Walk in the path of the righteous.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now this path has some interesting characteristics. It's a narrow one. It isn't a Broadway. It isn't sort of a religious freeway, where you can go all over the road and each side of the way that you want to. Somebody said, I don't like to hear that, that speaks of legalism, that speaks to the Bible friend. Why do we have the concept that as Christians, when we get free from our sins, we are free to do as we please, it is a narrow way that leads to life and it's a Broadway that leads to destruction. It's a difficult one. I don't think any of us who have been saved very long can say that being a Christian is easy. It's blessed. It's happy. It's joyous, but it's not easy.

James T. Jeremiah:

If you're having an easy life every day you live the Christian life, friend you better examine yourself to see whether you're in the path. It's not a pathway strewn with roses. It doesn't have all of the praises and the plaudits of men all the time. It'll have some rough waves, but it's a safe way, it's the path He chooses. It's an open pathway, not a tunnel. I meet Christians every once in a while, who give me the impression they like to live on the pathway of the righteous, if they could live in a tunnel, so nobody would see them.

James T. Jeremiah:

It's an open way. People watch us and we fail. Experienced it the other day. When I came home, convinced that I had failed. God help us to recognize when we have. It's not a tunnel in which we are living. There are no accidents on that way to the child of God, no accidents. There are no accidents in the Christian life. The man who walks the path of the righteous, God chooses his way, the path of the righteous. Well, it also involves a spiritual mission. Look at the text again. But the path of the just is like the shining light, that shineth more and more. The just, along the path, shine.

James T. Jeremiah:

Ye are the light of the world, said Jesus. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and give you a glorious epitaph. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and say what a great Christian he is. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and say, my, he'd make a good board member. Let your light so shine before men that they may say he ought to preach. No, no. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father, which is in heaven. Paul wrote to the Philippians, they were the sons of God, living in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation among whom you shine as lights in the world. Every time I think of that verse, I think of an experience from years ago, while preaching in the city of Indianapolis one Sunday night, with a group of students had gone with us. I got out on the highway, it

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was Route 40 in those days. And we had no sooner gotten out of the city than it was pitch black, raining. You couldn't see very far even with the lights.

James T. Jeremiah:

And then all of a sudden there was a burst of lightning that lightened the landscape for miles. It was a dark night and the lightening shown the brighter because the night was dark. 1976, and surely if God's son carries his coming to 2076, there will be some dark days for the child of God. Some of you may face them more than the rest of us. That's why we're so delighted in the Christian school, where we can have a ministry to young people, hoping to have some part, preparing them for future service. It's going to get dark.

James T. Jeremiah:

I heard the day news cast, where they're planning now to protect the burglar who comes to your house. If they can get a law passed through the Congress, you won't be able to protect them, if he wants to come in and take what he wants, according to that interpretation of it anyway, he can come in. You're going to get in trouble if you do anything to stop him. If he comes in, I'm going to try to stop him. The word of God says in the last days, perilous times will come. It says that there will be a time when iniquity or lawlessness is the word will abound, that day could be now. It's not going to be easy. It's going to be an opportunity to shine.

James T. Jeremiah:

Teenager came home. A teenage young man came home one day to his family and he said, I went to the meeting today. I got saved and I got a new heart. His younger brother, I suppose, 8 or 10 said, let me see it. He sort of had the idea that he could pull it out of his chest and show it to him, I guess. I want to tell you something. The world is saying to those of us who are children of God today, if you have a new heart, let me see it. They want to see it. They don't care too much about if you love Jesus honk as you pass by, they don't care too much about all of the trite and the trivia that goes on in the realm of Christianity. They want to see reality. They want to see the new heart. Why this would happen in a church, it must have been a Baptist church, but they had a clock in it that had good works. It would run well, every week the janitor wound it, but it had no hands. It kept its time to itself. One of the things we are good at is keeping our faith and our testimony and our experience with Christ, good works, inside. We keep it to ourselves.

James T. Jeremiah:

We have a supernatural, spiritual mission on this pathway to shine as we go along. Also involved in it, I think is the idea of steady growth. The path of the just is like the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. More and more. That means that there ought to be something happening, going on and brightening, John Darby translates it. Hosea said, then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord, then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord. You know, we'll never know more about God and His word until we follow on with what we know now to know more. Be wonderful if God would just dish it out in buckets full right now and we could all get everything we need to know in 20 minutes. That isn't the way God does it. We have truth. We obey truth. We have truth. We obey truth. We have truth. We obey truth all the way through life.

James T. Jeremiah:

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More and more unto the perfect day, there's growth. Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord, Jesus Christ. You cannot travel with God and not grow in knowledge and grace, obedience to his truth brings increased knowledge. The testimony should be brighter as we move along the way. There's a verse that I like very much over in the book of Corinthians, second Corinthians chapter 3, verse 18, it says, "but we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the spirit of the Lord." Behold Him and be like Him, steady growth. Sometimes I think we're like the person who would say 10 years ago, maybe you did this preparing for college and you, 10 years ago, you put a hundred dollars in the bank and every month, since then, you've been drawing \$25 out of the investment. If you have and they haven't talked to you at the bank, they will.

James T. Jeremiah:

But some of us have made a down payment in our investment in spiritual life. We've had an experience with God and we've been living on that experience ever since we had it, drawing on past experience, sort of a sidetrack, a side sitting on the main highway, seeing nothing new, but that isn't what that verse says, shining more and more unto the perfect day. Now the last thought, this path of the just has a glorious, wonderful ending in a steadfast hope. We have the perfect day. Somebody says some days, oh, this has been a perfect day, I doubt that. This has been a long day, I can believe that, this has been a trying day, that could happen, but nobody yet has had the perfect day. You know why it hasn't yet dawned, but it will.

James T. Jeremiah:

Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. This word, perfect day, has the idea of the steadying of the day or the noon day sun. You think of how bright it is at noon day and how the shadows disappear at noon day. Shadows in the morning, shadows in the evening, but when the sun is in its steadying state, at noon there are no shadows. Some of you young people have come out of secular schools, out of secularized home. And you have been impressed with the idea that all that's worthwhile is making a living down here.

James T. Jeremiah:

If you would be asked why you go to college, you'd say, well, I'm going to college that I might have a good profession and make everything I can, to be the best I can, to have the most I can, for the longest time I can. Now let me say there's nothing wrong. In fact, there's everything right, trying to select a profession, following it to the best of your ability, doing the best you can. I hope some of you become millionaires. We need some millionaires in the alumni association. But let me tell you, though, if that's all you have in mind, it is a pretty mundane, weak joyless kind of living. You have been whitewashed, some of you, brainwashed with the concept that all that really matters is the here and now, and anybody who talks about heaven and about glory is pie in the sky by and by.

James T. Jeremiah:

Well if it is brother it's the best pie I've ever heard about. And I like it. It's the perfect day. Some of our great songs have some great stories. During or shortly after the civil war, a man by the name of Dr. Samuel Bennett returned to his home in Elkhorn, Wisconsin. He came there to practice medicine. And one day a close friend of his came to visit him. His name was Joseph Webster. Webster was troubled about something, came into the doctor's home, sat down, put his head in his hands and began to worry

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about it. And the doctor noticed this, but finally his friend said, it'll be all right by and by. Somehow he had the victory over what was troubling him.

James T. Jeremiah:

These words came close to Dr. Bennett's heart and he sat down and wrote the following lines. There's a land that is fairer than day by faith we can see it afar. For the Father waits over the way to prepare us a dwelling place there. And his troubled friend was a musician. Looking over the shoulder of his doctor friend, he saw the words and began the composition of the music to go with the words. And so from that time unto this we've been singing, there is a land that is fairer than day. Keep your eyes on Jesus and the perfect day He has provided for you. It'll motivate you, help you, more than anything I can tell you today. Life is a story and volumes three, the past the present, the yet to be. The first is finished and laid away. The second we're reading day by day, the third and last or volume three is locked from sight in eternity. I cannot even try to predict, to imagine, what the day holds for you or for me beyond this hour. But I know one thing, that if you're walking the path of the righteous in obedience to God, you can have daily the hope of the perfect day.

James T. Jeremiah:

That ought to motivate us, to study, to work, to pray to serve. We are not living for time alone. We're walking the pathway, waiting for that glorious, wonderful whole He has for His own.

James T. Jeremiah:

Dear Lord, use the word of God in our hearts today, challenge us to serve you better, mindful of that wonderful provision made for us in Christ. Keep our eyes, dear Lord, upon thyself and do not take from us the hope of that perfect day. As we walk along the path of the righteous. In Jesus' name, Amen.