

Transcript

James T. Jeremiah:

We think about the wickedness and the immorality of our time, and we read the book of Corinthians, and study a little bit about the background of the city of Corinth and what Paul had to face there, we come to the conclusion that Paul's time was something like ours. As we tried to point out yesterday, the people of Paul's day lived in a period of intellectual conceit, when wisdom was the final thing, human wisdom. The church was divided with spiritual carnality, with strife, envy, and divisions. Moral corruptions prevailed in that city. As you know, from your reading about the city, the back part of the city is a mountain called the Acrocorinthus, on which a thousand female prostitutes lived in their relationship to their temple worship, Apollo and other areas. The moral corruption of the city was unbelievable, something like the United States of America and the world in which we live. These people were theologically confused. They had within their churches a great deal of contention. And of course we have a lot to say in Corinthians about the charismatic matter, the clamor of the time, and some of it that's come down to us.

James T. Jeremiah:

What are we going to do on a day like that? What did Paul suggest that these Corinthians do? He said, "Watch ye. Stand fast in the faith. Quit you like men. Be strong." And the first word we want to think about this morning is the words, "Watch ye." And I like to use the word to sum it up, caution. Be cautious. Be on the alert, always on guard. Watch for spiritual dangers. We need to watch our doctrine, our dedication, our deportment. We need to be concerned about our prayer, our preaching, our progress, and a lot of other things. We need to be sure to get the right answer. Somebody said it's difficult to get the right answer, because there's only one. There are many wrong answers. And so as believers in Christ and as leaders in the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ, it's imperative that we have the right answer, and we need to be alert to that.

James T. Jeremiah:

One of the things that I'm sure we're all aware of it is that things are not always what they seem. This comes back to me, as I look back over many years to the days when I took a course in plane geometry, in high school. Our plane geometry teacher was the basketball coach. And he was always trying to get us to think logically. And periodically, one of the class would say, "It seems as though this is the way it ought to be." And I can still hear him shout, "Things are not always what they seem." And we got the message, and went back, and reworked the problem. Generally, it came out with his answer, or else.

James T. Jeremiah:

Things are not always what they seem. Read an interesting story about that. There's a picture of a monk, seated before a bench. And as you look at the picture, you see him bowing his head. His hands are ahead of him. He's looking down, as though he's praying. But what he's really doing is squeezing a lemon. Things are not always what they seem.

James T. Jeremiah:

And there are a lot of things that we have to face in our day that sound good, look good. And if we're going to be men who live in this kind of a society, women who live in this kind of a society, that don't have lights that shine for Christ, we need to be watching, be cautious. Watch ye. Be on guard, because

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Satan seeks to make the good and the evil alluring. You say, well, that sounds like it ought to be preached to our churches. But unfortunately, some of us who are in the ministry of the gospel have found things, find them alluring. And it breaks your heart, as you look over the years and find out how many you have known who have gone down the road of moral ruin, because they didn't watch.

James T. Jeremiah:

We are living in a Corinthian culture. And that text fits well in our time, as it did in the Corinthian time. As we think today of Sodom and Gomorrah, we look at Sodom and Gomorrah through the eyes of the scripture, and look at America through the eyes of the newspaper, and we wonder how America survives, and Sodom and Gomorrah was destroyed. We are living in a vile, wicked day. We need to be on guard watching our lives. I need this. You need it.

James T. Jeremiah:

This idea of watching is an interesting thing. I'm not advocating that you swallow everything that William Barclay writes. Fact of the matter is, I've been making a little study of William Barclay's Philosophy of Miracles, and it's a frightening experience when you read it. But William Barclay must have been, or must be, a classics scholar. He has a great deal of background material. And in one of his books, the one on Revelation, he tells about the church at Sardis, and the portion in that scripture where it speaks to watch. And he mentions that this church was located in the city, on Acropolis, where the old city was located on Acropolis, a mountain jutting up in the back of it, [Timulus, Mount Timulus 00:07:01]. And he mentions that during the days of Cyrus, when he assaulted the city, for 14 days they stood and sought to bring that city down. But it was surrounded by a wall on the top of Acropolis, and they were secure. But a soldier kept looking at the top of it, then he saw a Sardian soldier drop his helmet over the battlement of the city. And he observed that he came down along the precipice, somehow, on some steps or crack that was in the wall, pick up his helmet, and bring it back to the top of the Acropolis. And that night that soldier led some 14 to 15 soldiers up that same crack and took the city.

James T. Jeremiah:

The city thought it was so secure. And so far beyond attack that it never bothered to be concerned about the enemy. And I'm glad I'm a Fundamentalist, and a Bible believer, and redeemed, and regenerated, and born again. And all else that God gives to his people, I'm glad for that. But that doesn't mean that we can live carelessly.

James T. Jeremiah:

The unfortunate part of the city of Sardis is that it happened when Cyrus came and the city fell. And subsequently later, after the times of Alexander the Great, it fell again in the same identical way. They didn't learn. Sometimes we don't, either. Paul said to the Ephesian, "Christians walk circumspectly." I thought of an illustration of this, at least it helps me. Walk circumspectly, walk cautiously, carefully. Putting it up in our time so that when we think of it going down the highway, when most of us are driving, we can think of this illustration. It means to walk right of center. Be careful not to get over on the other side of the yellow line. Walk carefully. Don't walk dangerously, in the sense of risking anything. Caution. Watch ye.

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Then in this word is not only the idea of caution, but in this text, is a thought of conviction. Stand fast in the faith. Be true to God and his word. Know what you believe, the apostle Paul is saying. Know why you believe it. Know how to defend it.

James T. Jeremiah:

Dr. Sugden and Dr. Wagner had been talking to us about study, knowing the word of God. Next to prayer, I suppose the devil hates our study of the Bible more than anything else. And I don't know how you are, but in this particular place of service, you have to fight to study. And I have a feeling that if you pastors would be honest about it all, you'd stand up and say, "That's true of us." We want to help people. People can be the greatest obstacle to study. But we have to do it. We must do it. If I were to go back into a pastorate, which I probably will not at this late year in life, after my 40th year, as Dr. Sugden has mentioned a couple of times, I would try to emphasize giving myself to the study of the word and to prayer to the best of my ability. Let somebody else take care of some of the details. Know what you believe. Stand fast in the faith. You can't stand fast in something you don't know. Neither can I. Know why you believe it.

James T. Jeremiah:

We have a lot of things going around these days. One of the things that I've been concerned about, and you have, too, is the attitude some people take toward the word of God. Because if we take the wrong attitude towards that, we take the wrong attitude toward everything. Know why we believe the word and what it says. Know how to defend it. Somebody said it doesn't need defending, it needs declaring. I know it needs declaring, and probably the best defense of the word is declaring it. We ought to know how to defend what we believe, not just say we believe it because the church believes it, and we believe what the church believes, and the church and us believe the same thing. Not a very good reason. Defend it.

James T. Jeremiah:

I like Paul's outlook on life as he comes to the end of his ministry, this great man of God with his convictions and his determination to serve the Lord in the midst of adversity and trouble. I like what he said in that last letter to Timothy, chapter 1 verse 12, "To which cause I have also suffered these things. Nevertheless, nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

James T. Jeremiah:

I hope that all of us now and through life, the end of it, can be able to say, I'm willing by the grace of God to suffer anything for his cause. "I'm willing," says Paul, "to be in prison." That doesn't deter me. I'm not ashamed, I'm content in my position. I'm not ashamed of what I believe. I am convinced that He is able. Paul was a dogmatic dogmatist. "I am convinced that He is able. I have entrusted to Him all that I have until that day." Paul lived in expectation, and I don't know any other way to walk cautiously and to have convictions than to keep our eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ, with expectation. Because I know He's coming back, and I believe He's coming back soon, and He may return today, that helps me to behave myself as I ought to in the day in which I live.

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When I was a young Christian, I was a member of a church that had not learned too much about personal separation for many years. It gradually came to that position, and a very strong position. But I remember as a young Christian, I didn't really get all of the worldliness out of my soul when I got baptized in that Baptist church. But I shall never forget an experience as a young believer that has been with me ever since. I recall going to a certain place where no Christian should have been in the first place. I recall going to that place a couple of times. One time I went in on Sunday afternoon, only to see my Sunday School teacher walk out, since the thing was all finished for that particular time. That didn't help me too much.

James T. Jeremiah:

But I went in there one night and I didn't have any exposition on the pre-millennial, pre-tribulational, dispensational view of the Lord's return. I didn't know anything about it. Fact of the matter is, I'd have to spend half of my day looking up those words in those days. But the Lord spoke to my heart, that if I wanted to live for God the way I ought to, I ought not to participate in the thing I was doing, because the Lord Jesus Christ may come.

James T. Jeremiah:

That may be old hat to many of you. I've known that all my life. Yeah, I have, too. But I think the greatest problem is that we get so occupied with things that we get our eyes off of Him. We are living in a Corinthian culture, and we have the same problems that they had. But thank God we have the same Christ who can deliver us.

James T. Jeremiah:

It's great to be serving God in these days. I was telling some folks the other day, I get weary with these old timers, these fellows who are 60 or older. We're always talking about how it was in the good old days. You ever met... "What a day it was," like every day was a revival time. And you see, they're so old and nobody can prove them wrong. But I'm tired of hearing that, because I like today. I lived in the good old days. You knew that, I guess. I started my ministry in the good old days. And Brother [Hensley 00:16:44], pastor of the church where I pastored the beginning of my ministry, is here in these meetings. He's been leading the singing. But he has it like the millennium now. He's living in the millennium in Panama, New York. We had everything in that place. We had running water. I ran next door to get it.

James T. Jeremiah:

And when you comprehend and think it through for a while, and you recognize that that kind of running water was the only kind of running water we had, you can imagine some of the things we didn't have. Take a little while, but you'll get it. We had central heating, right in the middle of the front room. And that old stove would go out every night. My wife never learned how to start a fire early in the morning. Those were the good old days.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now, push a button and the heat comes on. Push another one and the cold comes on. Turn the faucet, and if you paid your bill, the water runs. But that's not what I'm thinking about. I believe, folks, we live in a day, in this Corinthian culture of ours, that offers some of the greatest challenges that the Church of Jesus Christ has ever had. You think of the opportunities that God gives us, by the inventions that men have made and we can use. We ought to be telling the story, everywhere we can, as long as we can, to

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as many as we can, until the Lord comes. If we do not have the caution to watch and the conviction to go, we're going to miss the opportunities of a lifetime. And the only lifetime we have is ours. We better use it.

James T. Jeremiah:

I'm concerned that our churches and our people be evangelistic. I'm for evangelism. I get weary with people who are always talking about being teachers, and never being concerned about reachers. And if we don't reach them, we can't teach them. And I'm for the Wood family, especially if they have flesh, blood, and bones, but I'm not for the Wood family made out of wood. We live in a day when we must reach them, folks. The time is short. The Lord's coming, and someone who's not going to live very long, and we may die before He comes. I must admit to you that at the present time, I haven't made any investment in any ground in which I... I suppose some people think I'm going to lie for the rest of the time. I'm not paying interest on real estate I can't use. I may not need it, so why buy it? I suppose there's a spot out back here that may be available in case it ever is needed, and somebody has to go select one in a hurry. I'm not anticipating that.