

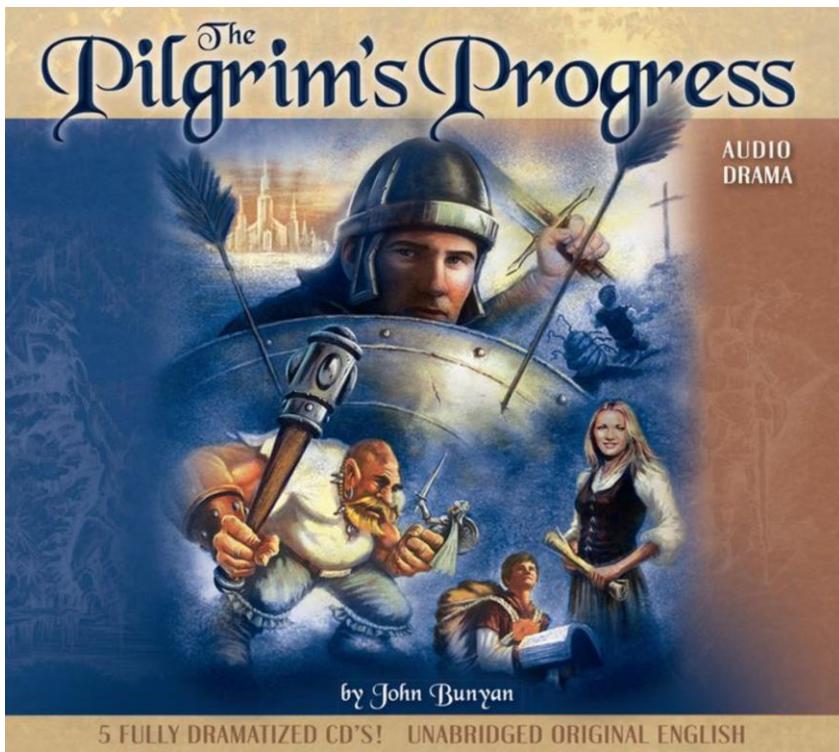
Jeremiah 9

Read Jeremiah 9:1-6: God has saddled Jeremiah with people who are so contrary to what is inside of his own heart and mind. Jeremaih lived out some of the themes of Christ. His own people rejected him. He was a man of sorrows.

Jeremiah is spending so much time crying that he has run out of tears. He is metaphorically wishing that his head had a fountain of water to keep his dry tear ducts flowing. This does not sound like a fun assignment.

Jeremiah literally has nothing in common with his own people. They have all lost their mind; and are disrespecting God. He is forced to live by them to relay his messages from God. He would much rather live out in the country, without having to hear the all-night parties and carousing. It is like staying in a cheap hotel room with thin walls having to listen to all kinds of late-night dark deeds. It would be like trying to hold a bible study in a biker bar, where guys are doing crystal meth at the bar, discussing murder plots, while fighting and cursing, with their groupie girls in their midst. It is just a crazy place for holiness to try to exist. We are normally called to seek things that are lovely and pure and excellent.

The old book Pilgrim's Progress is about a man escaping the city of destruction; and encountering all kinds of temptations. Some temptations are full frontal assaults from evil doers. Some are enticements to experience something. Some are disguised in flattery. Sometimes it can be just throwing away God's time. Some of the biblical characters were valiant in battle, to only fall to temptation or flattery. Like the pilgrim in the story we have to keep moving forward.



Sometimes it can be own body that is estranged from God. How do we un-see or un-hear something that keeps replaying in our mind? Sometimes, without getting into mischief, my heart hardens to what is holy and pure. The Holy Spirit is described like a gentle dove that is easily spooked and wants to dwell in a calm place. Sometimes we hurt God's feelings by just living our life without checking in or spending time with God.

Adultery is a sin that uniquely forces the Holy Spirit to have to sit there and watch the whole thing from his own Livingroom. He is stuck in our body after we are saved. Like Jeremiah, we can literally torture God with our hardened hearts.

And the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." (Genesis 6: 3)

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. (Philippians 4:8)

There are many monks, priests, nuns and orders of the Catholic Church who have taken vows of holiness and lived far away from temptations. That is not the answer either. We are called to be engaged in our culture; without becoming like it.

I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. (John 17:14-16)

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (Matthew 28:19)

Read Jeremiah 9:7-9: How do you form a church out of bullies, prostitutes, drug addicts, thieves, murderers and law breakers? How would you form a vibrant church in a prison full of law breakers and violent men? There are just no interested parties. Only the Holy Spirit can change a heart of stone. We are called to pray for our generation.

That is how the Calvary Chapel Movement got started with Pastor Chuck Smith. One encouragement is that those who have sinned worse are much more appreciative if they do get saved.

But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more (Romans 5:20)

When Chuck assumed Calvary Chapel's pastorate in 1965, the church consisted of 25 people. The generation then coming of age was exceptionally large, the product of the U.S.'s "baby boom" during post-World War II prosperity and optimism. However, said Chuck, the air of affluence masked an undercurrent of discontent youth. An unpopular war was providing them opportunity to voice their rage through protests and demonstrations. And Southern California was home to this cultural revolution.

As society seemed to shake and drugs circulated like candy, Chuck was repulsed and Kay was burdened. Again and again, he recounted, she tearfully and gently challenged her husband: "They just need the Lord.' 'They're dirty hippies. They need a bath,'" he said he would quip in return. Kay later explained, "I'd see them roaming the streets or wherever they were, and I'd start crying. ... I started praying and asking God, 'Why? What's wrong with their lives?'" Kay discerned God telling her, in response, that they were empty—and needed Him.

Entering the Hearts of Hippies



Her compassion won out, and the couple began studying the phenomenon. Yet they still felt unable to reach into the hippie culture. Chuck said that because of the generation and anti-establishment gaps, "They were so far from us. How do you even start to communicate with them?" As they prayed, it suddenly struck Kay: They needed to meet a hippie.

"They were so far from us. How do you even start to communicate with them?"

After being introduced to a couple who fit the hippie description, Chuck and Kay prepared the church to meet their new friends. The young people were well-received, and the countercultural community at Calvary Chapel began multiplying rapidly. A woman in the church rented a small house for young people to live and minister at in commune fashion; the home hosted nightly Bible studies and sent teams out daily to do street and beach evangelism. Within two weeks, 35 people had come to know the Lord and were staying there. A realtor soon offered a motel he owned for use as another Christian commune—the second of what would become several group homes.

Shocking Grace and Exponential Growth

Soon, Chuck reminisced, Calvary Chapel was baptizing hundreds of people per month. The revival was not without controversy; both internal struggle and external criticism of the Christian hippies and the church ebbed and flowed. But despite the challenges, the fellowship's countercultural community kept multiplying. Space problems became paramount, and the church tried one solution after another. The believers eventually purchased a large plot to build on; in the meantime, they erected "the Tent"—a 2½-year hub of the Jesus Movement. The structure held three Sunday morning services, in addition to Bible studies or concerts on most nights.

Read Jeremiah 9:10-22: When we sin, all of nature pays a price. The forest of Israel became a desert. The livestock are all gone after the Babylonians sacked the land. These verses describe how all of nature gets crushed by men's sins. In the beginning all animals were herbivores. When Adam sinned, the first two animals were killed to make animal skin covers.

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin (Romans 5:12)

Now animals and insects eat each other and live in constant terror of predators. Now we have plant and animal and human diseases. It all started with sin.

For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. (Romans 8:20-22)

Can we reverse this curse in a small way? Yes. We can reconcile ourselves to God and pray for each other.

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your

trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, [k]fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. (James 5:14-16)

Wormwood is used here to describe how bitter and disgusting that life becomes when we live apart from God. It is Murphy's Law. It is divorce. It is job dissatisfaction. It is depression. These are all signs from God, telling us that we are not following him.

Read Jeremiah 9: 23-25: