

Articles and Sermons :: Well, that Mizpah stuff wasn't just for study it seems**Well, that Mizpah stuff wasn't just for study it seems - posted by dolfan (), on: 2014/7/10 11:58**

My pastor is on a rare vacation with his family this week. He asked me to teach the Wednesday night service. Having read Jeremiah 42-44 and discussing it here, it was a timely study. I developed that prayerfully for the lesson I taught last night. I'm going to share it here for your feedback.

It was a good hour long, so this is lengthy to read.

God speaks. And, people do not always listen. God speaks. People do not always agree. God speaks. People do not always obey. God's Word is largely ignored, and where it isn't ignored it is mostly hated, and where it isn't ignored or hated it is mostly disobeyed.

This is true of the church of Jesus Christ where we live today. David Platt, in his book, *Radical, Taking Back Your Faith From The American Dream*, says this -- "God beckons storm clouds and they come. He tells the wind to blow and the rain to fall, and they obey immediately. He speaks to the mountains, 'You go there,' and He says to the seas, 'You stop here,' and they do it. Everything in all creation responds in obedience to the Creator...until we get to you and me. We have the audacity to look God in the face and say, 'No'."

I'll go one further than my brother. We have the audacity to ask God for direction, for help, for a word, and then when He gives it, we look Him in the face and say, "No."

Tonight, I want us to walk through a kind of exercise that is part prophetic plea, part biblical word study. My heart's prayer is that we will see from the Scriptures themselves what God is telling us to do, and that we'll do it. So, let me first give us a road map so that as we go through this you will see where we are heading.

First, I want to place the idea of obedience to God's specific prophetic instruction in a historical context. We are going to read and discuss what was happening Jeremiah 42 - 44. There, specific prophetic instructions were given. Then, we are going to see if that kind of specific prophetic instruction appears in the New Testament to be applied to the life of the believer. I will tip you off here " yes, yes it does. Then, we are going to open up what kind of instruction that is " and we're going to do a little bit of word study, the kind of thing any of us can do and should do as we live in the pages of our bibles. Then, we're going to draw some conclusions, some lessons about what we need to do with this specific prophetic instruction, and some lessons about what we can expect if we don't do what we need to do with this instruction.

We'll be in Jeremiah 42 in a little while. I'm going to give some background. And, I'm going to be praying in my spirit that the Holy Spirit turns a light on inside of our own spirits that we understand Him and obey Him here.

Jeremiah the prophet was active at the time Judah went into Babylonian captivity and the run-up to that. So, we're talking 586 BC as the crucial year. As you will recall, Israel had always been wicked. From the time they left Egypt their actions and their words proved that they loved two things: paganism and bondage. Idolatry and bondage, just like the nations around them. They were special only because God made a covenant with Abraham that through Abraham's seed the whole world would be blessed, and we see that fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and the blessing is that we can be part of this covenant with Abraham by faith in Jesus. Israel had the responsibility to obey God's Word that was given to them. But, a lust for the bondage and the idolatry of the surrounding nations ALWAYS trapped them.

Israel decided that they wanted a king like other nations. God gave them specific prophetic instruction about what that would look like for them " and it wasn't good. But, they said, "Ehh, so what? We want a king." And, in 1 Sam. chs. 7 and 8 " at a place called Mizpah in Benjamin " they got their request when God gave them Saul as king. Remember that word " Mizpah.

So, they got Saul, then David. Saul loved disobedience, lust, idolatry and witchcraft. David liked to have women he'd never had, and he murdered to get one he wanted, and he allowed his children to do all sorts of evil because of

a too-tender heart toward them. Solomon loved everything his eyes could see and he could imagine. He spent lavishly on the Temple, his own house and on his own sexual lusts. Solomon married HUNDREDS of foreign wives from the peoples and tribes of Canaan, and with those wives came their pagan gods, which Solomon was fine with.

Solomon died, the ten northern tribes of Israel separated into their own kingdom and established a new capital in Samaria. They rejected the throne of David, saying, "we have no part in David." Remember, it was David's line that God promised to have someone on his throne forever. To say "we have no part in David" was to say "we have no part in God." From that point on, the ten northern tribes, whom the Bible refers to altogether as "Israel", went through a few centuries of wicked kings and rulers. They thoroughly rejected the worship of Yahweh and completely turned into Canaanites with their paganism. God sent prophets to warn them and plead with them to woo them to repentance, warning them of judgment and destruction if they failed to obey. Israel said, "Ehh. Kill the prophets. We want what we got." By 722 BC, they got what they wanted "the bondage of pagan masters. Assyria overran them, took them away and dispersed them.

The other tribes were Judah (some of Benjamin) and Levi. Their capital remained Jerusalem. Their kings remained in David's line. Their culture, though, tracked right along with Israel. They loved idolatry and paganism. Their kings were a mixed bag of complete unfaithfulness to God "most of them were" and a few kings who worshipped God but allowed the paganism to continue. Things advanced to the point where paganism was practiced inside the Temple. Ultimately, the ark of the covenant was taken and the gold and silver vessels were taken from the Temple and the treasury by the Babylonians. God sent prophets to warn Judah and plead with them to woo them to repentance, warning them of judgment and destruction if they failed to obey. Judah said, "Ehh. Kill the prophets. We want what we got." By 586, BC, they got what they wanted "Nebuchadnezzar and the pagan masters of Chaldea (Babylon, Iraq) overran them and took some of them" basically all of the wealthier class and their assets, artisans, able young people -- away.

One of those prophets who warned Judah was Jeremiah. Jeremiah had told Judah and its kings and its people for years what God had told him to tell them "repent or be overtaken and forced to leave Jerusalem. God told Jeremiah, though, that He would leave a remnant of people in the land after their destruction, the poor and the outcast. That He would, after 70 years of rest for the land, bring the surviving exiles back from Babylon to Jerusalem, and that He would begin a process of setting them up securely in Jerusalem.

Jeremiah lived to see this destruction and exile. When Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army destroyed Jerusalem 586 BC, Nebuchadnezzar captured Zedekiah the king, put out his eyes and put him in prison in Babylon, and he gave instruction to the commander Nebuzaradan to give Jeremiah a choice to come live in peace in Babylon or to live in peace with the leftovers in Judah under the care of a man named Gedeliah, a Jew who was the appointed governor of the new Babylonian province that included Judah.

Gedeliah and the Babylonians established a new capital in --- Mizpah. (What did Israel do at Mizpah before? Got the king they wanted like the other nations, right?) What happens here is very interesting, tragic and helpful to study. There is something you need to understand about Mizpah "it means "heap of witness". A marking point that says, "This is a memorial of what we have said we will do. And, if we fail to do as we've said, this marker is a witness against us." There were several Mizpahs in the region and in the Bible, kind of like there is more than one "Five Points" "one in Lawrence County, one in Huntsville, one in Birmingham, and so on. This one was just a hop, skip and jump north from Jerusalem.

Gedeliah was all set to govern in Mizpah over the new Babylonian conquest in Judah. There were still some resisters among the Judeans left behind. In fact, some historians say as many as 75% of Judeans were left in the land after the exile. The rich, the educated, the influential, the able, the artisans were totally taken to Babylon. The bible says that the poor and outcast remained in the land. Gedeliah told them, "Look, just submit to our control. You can stay here and have a field day. All the grapes that you used to have to take the gleanings from to survive? Now you can raise them as your own. Be productive. Get wealthy. Get healthy. There's no one here to stop you. We're just going to collect crazy high taxes from you, and we're going to use your location here as a staging area for our conquests to the south and west. But, you're small and insignificant to us. We've already taken your strongest and best to serve our needs in Babylon. So, just let us handle this. We got this."

That is where Jeremiah found himself after a long, exhausting, painful, humiliating and distraught lifetime. He had been faithful to God by delivering God's prophetic word. He had pronounced judgment from God on Judah and Jerusalem. He had been arrested, put into a cistern, pulled out of a cistern near death, kept under arrest, and

completely mocked and rejected by everyone in Judah. He would prophesy the truth of God, and he'd be counter prophesied by people who said they spoke for God but didn't. He would try to convince kings and leaders of God's true judgment to come, but he would be rejected and mocked openly for saying so. If anyone ever had a futile ministry that failed miserably in the eyes of men, it was Jeremiah.

But, God was always with Jeremiah. He spoke truthfully to Jeremiah about Jeremiah. He spoke truthfully to Jeremiah about Judah and Jerusalem and the nations around them. Now, after all this heartache of warning the covenant people of God to repent or face judgment, after all this disappointment of what seemed to be an endlessly hopeless effort, after all this rejection, and after seeing his beloved Jerusalem overtaken and wiped out in large degree by the Babylonians, Jeremiah finally gets to what must have given him some sort of physical relief – a stipend and allowance in Mizpah from the hands of the helper of an invading king.

But, Mizpah is not a rocking chair kind of place. It is a heap of witness, right? Judeans were gathering wine and summer fruit in abundance. There were still a scant few fighters in the land. Most of them accepted Gedeliah's invitation to yield and be fruitful. Two, though, didn't. The old lust for paganism and bondage was not eradicated from the heart of these men.

One was named Ishmael (not THAT Ishmael), the other Johanan. In Ammon, where the country of Jordan is today, was a king named Baalis. He approached Ishmael and said, "Kill Gedeliah for me." No doubt, Baalis made a promise to protect Ishmael from the Babylonians, which still would've put Ishmael as a subject to a foreign king. Johanan learned of this plot and told Gedeliah, "Let me kill Ishmael, because he is going to kill you in cahoots with the Ammonite king." Gedeliah says, "I don't believe you. Ishmael is not that kind of guy." Only Ishmael was that kind of guy. He and ten other men took advantage of Gedeliah's trust, sat down to eat with him in Mizpah, then arose and killed not only Gedeliah, but all the Judeans who were with him in his facility at Mizpah and the Chaldean soldiers who happened to be there.

Now, if you are Ishmael this is a really bad decision because Nebuchadnezzar has just been Yahweh's instrument of judgment. If you read Jeremiah and the intensely graphic language that God uses to describe just how bad Nebuchadnezzar was, you just know Ishmael is in for big trouble for killing Gedeliah and the Chaldean soldiers.

The next day, some of the poor, outcast people left behind after the exile were on their way to Jerusalem to present offerings and to mourn at the now decimated ruins of the temple of the Lord. Ishmael kills them, but leaves a few of them alive because they bribed him with promises of wheat, barley, oil and honey stored away in a field. Ishmael, his men, and now these captives who bribed him to stay alive, are headed eastward toward Ammon for protection by the king Baalis.

Only, Johanan was not going to let Ishmael get away with that. Johanan wasn't being righteous. But, Ishmael had messed up what amounted to a pretty good gig for them with Gedeliah when you consider everything else that had happened. I mean, everything that Jeremiah had told them from God had come to pass exactly as God had told them. They saw it come true. To be in that situation, still in the land, with a promise from the governor that they'd be okay if they just calmed down and worked the land and paid tribute, there was real opportunity for a guy in Johanan's position. He could even have turned his heart to the worship of Yahweh. He could take comfort in that since Jeremiah himself, God's prophet, was still alive in Mizpah. He could've seen that this was God's hand at work.

Johanan and his small crew attacked Ishmael and his small crew before they could get to Jordan. Ishmael's captors turned on him, and maybe even some of his own followers, as Jeremiah 41 reads. Johanan essentially intercepts the crowd with Ishmael and looks like he's going to do a pick six** moving WESTWARD toward Egypt. After all, Johanan figures that Nebuchadnezzar and his lieutenant, Nebuzaradan, are not going to care that Johanan tried to warn Gedeliah about Ishmael. Gedeliah, his only and best witness to that fact, is dead. On their way, they stopped near Bethlehem.

Then, apparently, maybe, they went to Mizpah. More specifically, they went to Jeremiah, maybe in Mizpah, maybe near Bethlehem, the record isn't clear. But, here, Johanan is about to heap a witness on his own head. Watch. Jeremiah 42 – 44. I'm going to narrate and abbreviate parts of this for the sake of time.**

42 said to Jeremiah the prophet, "Let our plea for mercy come before you, and pray to the LORD your God for us, for all this remnant because we are left with but a few, as your eyes see us" 3 that the LORD your God may show us the way we should go, and the thing that we should do. 4 5 Then they said to Jeremiah, "May the LORD be a true and faithful witness against us if we do not act according to all the word with which the LORD your God sends you to us. 6 Whether it is good or bad, we will obey the voice of the LORD our God to whom we are sending you, that it may be well with us when we obey the voice of the LORD our God."

7 At the end of ten days the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah. He said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, to whom you sent me to present your plea for mercy before him: 10 If you will remain in this land, then I will build you up and not pull you down; I will plant you, and not pluck you up; for I relented of the disaster that I did to you. 11 Do not fear the king of Babylon, of whom you are afraid. Do not fear him, declares the LORD, for I am with you, to save you and to deliver you from his hand. 12 I will grant you mercy, that he may have mercy on you and let you remain in your own land. 13 But if you say, "We will not remain in this land," disobeying the voice of the LORD your God 14 and saying, "No, we will go to the land of Egypt, where we shall not see war or hear the sound of the trumpet or be hungry for bread, and we will dwell there," 15 then hear the word of the LORD, O remnant of Judah. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: If you set your faces to enter Egypt and go to live there, 16 then the sword that you fear shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine of which you are afraid shall follow close after you to Egypt, and there you shall die. 17 All the men who set their faces to go to Egypt to live there shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. They shall have no remnant or survivor from the disaster that I will bring upon them.

18 "For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: As my anger and my wrath were poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so my wrath will be poured out on you when you go to Egypt. You shall become an execration, a horror, a curse, and a taunt. You shall see this place no more. 19 The LORD has said to you, O remnant of Judah, "Do not go to Egypt." Know for a certainty that I have warned you this day 20 that you have gone astray at the cost of your lives. For you sent me to the LORD your God, saying, "Pray for us to the LORD our God, and whatever the LORD our God says declare to us and we will do it." 21 And I have this day declared it to you, but you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD your God in anything that he sent me to tell you. 22 Now therefore know for a certainty that you shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence in the place where you desire to go to live."

43 Jehonatan the son of Kareah and all the insolent men said to Jeremiah, "You are telling a lie. The LORD our God did not send you to say, "Do not go to Egypt to live there,"" And they arrived at Tahpanhes.

8 Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah in Tahpanhes.

44 The word came to Jeremiah concerning all the Judeans who lived in the land of Egypt, at Migdol, at Tahpanhes, at Memphis, and in the land of Pathros, 2 "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: You have seen all the disaster that I brought upon Jerusalem and upon all the cities of Judah. Behold, this day they are a desolation, and no one dwells in them, 3 because of the evil that they committed, provoking me to anger, in that they went to make offerings and serve other gods that they knew not, neither they, nor you, nor your fathers. 4 Yet I persistently sent to you all my servants the prophets, saying, "Oh, do not do this abomination that I hate!" 5 But they did not listen or incline their ear, to turn from their evil and make no offerings to other gods. 6 Therefore my wrath and my anger were poured out and kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, and they became a waste and a desolation, as at this day. 7 And now thus says the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel: Why do you commit this great evil against yourselves, to cut off from you man and woman, infant and child, from the midst of Judah, leaving you no remnant? 8 Why do you provoke me to anger with the works of your hands, making offerings to other gods in the land of Egypt where you have come to live, so that you may be cut off and become a curse and a taunt among all the nations of the earth? 9 Have you forgotten the evil of your fathers, the evil of the kings of Judah, the evil of their wives, your own evil, and the evil of your wives, which they committed in the land of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? 10 They have not humbled themselves even to this day, nor have they feared, nor walked in my law and my statutes that I set before you and before your fathers.

11 "Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will set my face against you for harm, to cut off all Judah. 12 I will take the remnant of Judah who have set their faces to come to the land of Egypt to live, and they shall all be consumed. In the land of Egypt they shall fall; by the sword and by famine they shall be consumed. From the least to the greatest, they shall die by the sword and by famine, and they shall become an oath, a horror, a curse, and a taunt."

aunt. 13 I will punish those who dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence, 14 so that none of the remnant of Judah who have come to live in the land of Egypt shall escape or survive or return to the land of Judah, to which they desire to return to dwell there. For they shall not return, except some fugitives.â€

15 Then all the men who knew that their wives had made offerings to other gods, and all the women who stood by, at a great assembly, all the people who lived in Pathros in the land of Egypt, answered Jeremiah: 16 â€As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of the LORD, we will not listen to you. 17 But we will do everything that we have vowed, we will make offerings to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her, as we did, both we and our fathers, our kings and our officials, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For then we had plenty of food, and prospered, and saw no disaster. 18 But since we left off making offerings to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have lacked everything and have been consumed by the sword and by famine.â€ 19 And the women said, â€When we made offerings to the queen of heaven and poured out drink offerings to her, was it without our husbands' approval that we made cakes for her bearing her image and poured out drink offerings to her?â€

20 Then Jeremiah said to all the people, men and women, all the people who had given him this answer: 21 â€As for the offerings that you offered in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, you and your fathers, your kings and your officials, and the people of the land, did not the LORD remember them? Did it not come into his mind? 22 The LORD could no longer bear your evil deeds and the abominations that you committed. Therefore your land has become a desolation and a waste and a curse, without inhabitant, as it is this day. 23 It is because you made offerings and because you sinned against the LORD and did not obey the voice of the LORD or walk in his law and in his statutes and in his testimonies that this disaster has happened to you, as at this day.â€

24 Jeremiah said to all the people and all the women, â€Hear the word of the LORD, all you of Judah who are in the land of Egypt. 25 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: You and your wives have declared with your mouths, and have fulfilled it with your hands, saying, â€We will surely perform our vows that we have made, to make offerings to the queen of heaven and to pour out drink offerings to her.â€ Then confirm your vows and perform your vows! 26 Therefore hear the word of the LORD, all you of Judah who dwell in the land of Egypt: Behold, I have sworn by my great name, says the LORD, that my name shall no more be invoked by the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, â€As the Lord GOD lives.â€ 27 Behold, I am watching over them for disaster and not for good. All the men of Judah who are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by famine, until there is an end of them. 28 And those who escape the sword shall return from the land of Egypt to the land of Judah, few in number; and all the remnant of Judah, who came to the land of Egypt to live, shall know whose word will stand, mine or theirs. 29 This shall be the sign to you, declares the LORD, that I will punish you in this place, in order that you may know that my words will surely stand against you for harm: 30 Thus says the LORD, Behold, I will give Pharaoh Hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies and into the hand of those who seek his life, as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, who was his enemy and sought his life.â€

Okay, lots of reading there. In 567 BC, about 20 years after the Judeans arrived in Egypt, this prophecy was fulfilled. Hereâ€™s the point. People of the remnant claimed that they would obey God and said, â€we witness to this, let God witness this, that we will obey Him. Let Him specifically instruct us what to do.â€ When God gave the word to them, they disobeyed. Then, they kept mocking him by using His name but worshipping idols. God judged them.

Thatâ€™s the historical context. Hereâ€™s the prophetic plea part of our lesson. We are in a deep historical context of our own. We just observed the 238th anniversary of what we call our nationâ€™s birthday, July 4. 238 years is plenty of time for a culture to become so rooted that every part of reality gets filtered through what that culture deems to be normal and acceptable. We have a cultural ideal that even Christians celebrate. We call it the American dream, right?

A house, 2-3 cars, couple of kids, jobs with upward opportunities, retirement plans, and, of course in our part of America, belonging to a church and living a moral life. Thatâ€™s our shade on the American dream. But, it is idolatry and bondage. We serve ourselves, so that means that we are our own masters. Jesus said no one can serve two masters. So, when we say we serve God, when we confess at our baptisms that we yield to the authority of Jesus Christ to be our Lord and Master but we live in the pursuit of what we want, we are Johanon. Our own baptisms are Mizpahs, witnessing against us. And, judgment awaits us.

David Platt, once again, writes, "As American Christians in this system of thinking, faith is a matter of taste, not of truth.....I implore you to consider the urgent need before us to forsake the American dream now in favor of radical abandonment to the person and purpose of Christ."

Consider the urgent need before us. The person and purpose of Christ is before us. The need to be serious followers of Jesus is before us. The need for the word of God and the people of God to be enough for us is before us. Heaven and hell and the end of the world are before us. Or, we can hang onto our own personal, individual versions of the American Dream and ride it all the way to Egypt, praising Jesus for our mortgages, our degrees, our achievements, our children's achievements, our comforts, even our church involvement, all the way to judgment.

We begin with this lie and we travel onward from it. Here is the lie: If you accept Jesus as your personal Savior, you will be saved and you can live out God's wonderful plan for your life. And, we spend the rest of our lives in churches in an effort to find God's wonderful plan for me. That's idolatry, the mixture of the forms of worship of God with the spirit of the world.

We never accept Jesus. The idea is not in the Bible. He accepts us. He is not some wimpy, emo-music, Jesus-Culture Savior begging for us to let Him in. He is Almighty God who insists that we surrender to Him in worship and truth. Love is not the warm assurance of His presence. Love is the wounds He suffered on a cross and the wounds we suffer to glorify His name before a world that rejects Him --- and if we're living for Him, it rejects us. And, the world rejects Him by redefining Him away from His own revelation of Himself in Scripture. We never accept Jesus. We surrender to Him because He is worthy of our whole lives, without reservation of anything to ourselves. There is no wonderful plan for your life --- there is a wonderful commandment to love Him and love one another; there is a wonderful commission to teach the gospel to a dying world and to baptize them and train them as followers of Jesus; there is a wonderful empowerment of the Holy Spirit to enable you to accomplish His glory instead of your good time; there is a wonderful promise of His presence with you; there is a wonderful promise of His return for you. That is God's plan. You are part of His plan if you surrender to it and obey it. He commands all men everywhere to repent. He is patient, but His patience is reaching an end. How do we know this?

We know it through the rhema word of God. This is the word study portion of the lesson.

What do you mean by rhema, Tim? When you study the Bible in English, you will encounter words that, in the original language, are expressed in one of several different words with different shades of meaning. Like the word "love", for example. The word that appears "love" in our English bibles could be philos (brotherly love, love for a friend, we get the name Philadelphia from it "city of brotherly love"); or agape (love that requires nothing from the recipient; enables us to love our enemies, the form of love that is used most to describe how Christian love looks), or other words that mean love.

There are also several words for the words "word", "utterance", or "say", or "speak" and the like. One that we know best is the word "logos". It means "word". Jesus is described in John and in 1 John as being the "Word" of God, the living word of God, the logos of God. There is the word "grapho", which just means written word. Another is the Greek word "rhema". Well, what's a "rhema"?

"Rhema" comes from a root word that means "to speak", and it most commonly means "to speak what to do". A command. In the OT, the Hebrew word for this kind of speech is "dabar". Jeremiah gave Johanan a *dabar*. A rhema. It appears 70 times, in various forms, in the NT. A couple of the most prominent examples. Jesus quoted the OT 3 times to Satan when Jesus was being tempted while fasting 40 days in the wilderness. He told Satan, first, "Man does not live by bread alone but by every word (rhema) that proceeds from the mouth of God." Important idea: When God speaks a word that I am to arrange my life around it, and hang my life on the doing of that word, that word is a rhema from God. Other important idea: Everything Jesus and the NT writers tell me to do is my rhema.

Let's look at another example. Romans 10:17 "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word (rhema) of God." What word of God is Paul talking about in Romans 10:17? We can read more of the chapter to put it in context. Go up to verse 13 "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never

heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" So, faith comes by hearing and hearing through the word of Christ (or God, depending on your translation).

Who is he talking about "they"? Israel and the Gentiles. The specific context here is preaching the gospel to Israel and their rejection of Christ. But, in Romans 10:13, Paul is quoting Joel 2:32. "It shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Everyone means the nations, the Gentiles. How do we know that? Read Joel 2:28 "It shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh." How do we know all flesh means Gentiles? Read Acts 10. Cornelius, an Italian soldier assigned to Judea (Caesarea) sees Jewish worship there, becomes devout to the Lord in the Jewish way, a foreigner who observes the Jewish faith, hears in prayer and the Lord speaks to him "I've heard your prayers, and I'm sending a guy named Peter to you. Send two of your men to go get him." Meanwhile, Peter is on a roof in Joppa, has a vision of angels lowering a blanket with food that was forbidden for Jews to eat, and the angel telling Peter to eat, Peter refusing in the vision to eat, and angel telling Peter, "If I call it clean, you don't call it unclean", this happens three times, the vision ends, just as Cornelius two messengers knock on the door of the house where Peter is in Joppa and they have this message, "Cornelius a Gentile Roman soldier has been told by God to send us for you." Peter preaches the gospel to Cornelius, Cornelius and his family get saved and the Holy Spirit fills them and they speak in tongues, and Peter says, "these Gentiles received the Holy Spirit just as we did" in Acts 2, just as Peter himself had preached was a fulfillment of "Joel 2. So, when we read Joel 2:32 and see the phrase "everyone" it means people all around the world from every ethnic, every racial group "the Gentiles, not just the Jews.

So, here is the rhema word of God, Romans 10:17, faith comes by hearing the gospel of Christ. The rhema is the gospel of Christ to repent and believe, be baptized and be filled with the Spirit of God. These are commands. Do this, do that. When you obey the rhema, what does God do? He does exactly what He says He'll do. The very first rhema you can obey is to repent and be baptized, to be saved and to receive the Holy Spirit. You live in that rhema from now on. You continue to do and be transformed by the renewing of your mind. You continue to live as one becoming more like the son of God. Who is with you in that? God Himself. He promises not to leave you, not to forsake you, to supply you, to empower you to do His rhema. 1 Peter 1:25 "But the word (rhema) of the Lord remains forever. And this word (rhema) is the good news that has been brought to you." That's the very first rhema you can obey.

There's a second specific prophetic instruction, another part of the rhema of the gospel. What is it? Proclaim the good news and train more followers of Jesus. Make that the very reason for your whole life.

Here's where we are. We gather in a church building in America 1-3 times a week and the church in America, the church in Alabama, the church in Decatur is failing in its purpose. Our purpose is to glorify God by obeying the rhema word of God. Ours is a church culture that dangerously disconnects the grace of God from the glory of God. We like the idea of enjoying God's grace. We bathe ourselves in sermons, so-called worship services and prayer meetings that exalt a grace that centers on us. Grace is wonderful. But, when we disconnect grace from its purpose of saving lost people and turning them into followers of Jesus who will put aside everything from now on to pursue the rhema word of God by spreading the good news, we have fled to Egypt with John, we have said "No" to God in spite of having said "Yes" to Him privately and publicly in our baptisms, we are our own Mizpahs, we witness against our own testimony of salvation, and we might as well be spreading ourselves before some pagan queen of heaven.

We work our jobs, we love our families, we live our lives, we engage in relationships with people outside the church for our own enjoyment and benefit, we enjoy and benefit from the church relationships, too, but the rhema of God is not going forth from us. We have pledged in conversion, we have pledged in baptism that we are His, but the rhema of God is not going forth from us. We have a specific prophetic instruction from the written word -- grapho -- of God "the Bible" that if we are His then we will DO the commanded RHEMA word of God, proclaim the gospel, baptize people, turn them into disciples; that we will DO the commanded RHEMA of God, living with as much need for doing it as our bodies need food to eat. Isn't that what Jesus means when He says we don't live by bread alone but by every rhema that comes from God?

Here's where we are going. The gospel is not so we will spend eternity in heaven. I'll say that again. The gospel is not so we will spend eternity in heaven. That puts us as the goal of the gospel. We're not the go

al of the gospel. God's glory is the goal. We are here for HIS glory, that's it. Revelation 4:11. God centers everything on Himself. Even our salvation is about Him and not truly "about us". He leads us in paths of righteousness so we can be with Him for eternity? No. Psalm 23 says that He leads us in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. He says in Isaiah 48:11 "For my own sake! For my own sake I do it! I will not give my glory to another." Are you saved? Then it is for the praise of the glory of His grace, not for yourself. Ephesians 1:4-6. Are you called by His name? Then it is for His glory, not yours. Isaiah 43:6, 7. In Ezekiel 36:22-24, God makes clear that His salvation of His people is for His own glory, not for their own glory or their own good. We are not the end, we are not the goal of the gospel. His glory is. The gospel is not so we will spend eternity in heaven.

But, we are --- all of us --- headed toward the judgment of God. Soon, the judgment of God is coming to the world. What is happening right now as we speak is "strong delusion" being sent into the world by God because people have rejected the rhema "not just the gospel of Christ but the proclaiming and training in the gospel of Christ. To say I believe the gospel but refuse to proclaim the gospel/teach/baptize/train in the gospel is like Jehonah. It is wicked. It brings judgment. "They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness" (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12).

The lie is that I can have this world and heaven, too. Whether I believe that IN the name of Jesus, or if I reject Jesus and STILL believe it, it is a strong delusion that people will not shake and cannot shake. A segregation is being done by the Holy Spirit in the world. A separation of those who are His and those who are not. A separation of those who are His from those who think they are His and are not. Romans 1 speaks of people that "although they knew God, they did not glorify Him" but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened." They claimed wisdom, it says, but were actually fools. Their thinking connected with God in their self-identity, but it was soon shaken to the point where their thoughts, even of God, were nothing. The light was turned off. They still thought they were His. But, they were made to believe a lie. So, God gave them over to a depraved mind.

There are people, perhaps in this room, who in your own minds believe, "This is baloney. I know I'm right with God." Or, "What's he even talking about?" But, hear this: We cannot excuse ourselves any more from obeying the rhema of God's specific prophetic instructions to us. God will protect His glory. He won't let us profane it. He has spoken to this church. Some of us are going to find ourselves one day where we see the light after a time when we thought we were walking in the light all along. That light, I'm afraid, will not be a light of mercy but a light of judgment. Now is mercy. Now is the time to walk in the light. Now is the time to put away our love for this world, our love for our own selves, our own ways, our own wants, our own privileges and rights as we see them, and to pursue God by obeying the specific prophetic instructions he has given to us. Let's do the rhema word God has given to us.

Re: Well, that Mizpah stuff wasn't just for study it seems - posted by havok20x, on: 2014/7/10 12:19

dolfan,

my time on sermonindex is intermittent. Can I copy this and put it on my ipad so I can read it at home?

Re: - posted by dolfan (), on: 2014/7/10 12:34

Oh, sure. Please do.

Re: - posted by Elibeth, on: 2014/7/10 13:27

Dear Bro.,dolfan,

If I have EVER heard a good message and true,this is it.

I would like to copy this?

Praise God and God bless you mightily in Him,

elizabeth

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2014/7/10 15:02

Dolfan--

I am curious as to how you presented this to your listeners?

I am also curious how it went over.

Re: - posted by dolfan (), on: 2014/7/10 15:21

Whenever I teach in the whole church setting, I do a manuscript and I read/talk it. I use an iPad. So, I simply stood at the podium and conversationally stated it pretty much (95%) as written.

How it went over. You know, I don't know. "Went over" in the usual way that church audiences hear something, I guess. People were, for the most part, attentive. I saw the heads nodding of those who I expected to nod. I saw blank stares from those who I expected to stare blankly. :) I saw some disgust as in, "Oh, boy, here we go again." And, then there is a segment --- and I think a majority --- of people who just sit there and do not react at all visibly and who will think about it long enough to reach the end of their pews walking out until someone else says "hi" to them and then it pretty much is over for them.

The nodders are the older folks. The blank starers are the younger folks. The disgusted or the politely disinterested are probably more of the young parents to late 40's range.

One very interesting barometer I always look for is my wife's sister. Her reaction the last time I taught something (actually, that I believe I posted here) that wasn't too different theme-wise was, "That's hard for a lot of people to swallow." Meaning: I see what you're saying, but my kids and grandkids are more important to me and there's NO WAY I'm giving up a thing because I really can be saved and have all THIS too and pretty well just come to church and be moral.

She didn't even speak to me last night, so I'm hoping she got shaken some. Or maybe she just tuned me out. :)

All I can say is this is where I am and I can only speak from the abundance of my heart. I love these people dearly. I also fear for us.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2014/7/10 15:30

Does your pastor teach hard sermons?

Re: - posted by dolfan (), on: 2014/7/10 15:40

Sometimes he does. He is balanced, though, I would say, especially on a longer arc of time. He is always straightforward. In my view, he is probably too easy on us after being hard. But, you can be a discouragement if you are hard without hope. He works on that, I think.

Re: - posted by havok20x, on: 2014/7/10 17:38

Thank you, brother.

I agree with you, so how are we going to do it? What does it look like to be obedient in regards to evangelism?

Do I just stand up and preach to everyone in my office? Do I go to my church and tell everyone? Street preach?

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2014/7/10 17:51

Good question. I personally don't think street preaching works; I don't think there is a ton of street preaching in the NT. Usually Jesus did a miracle and the crowds gathered; the same was true of the apostles. Of course there are charismatic evangelists who say this should still be the model today. The apostles went to the synagogues or places they were invited to speak. Again I am speaking in generalities because there may be an exception. I guess John the Baptist was a street preacher in a sense. Plus I admit I am chicken to stand on a street corner and preach which may be part of the reason I don't like it. Personally street preachers turn me off and I am a believer. But I really don't think they are very effective, at least not in today's age.

Revivals tend to happen when least expected, and of course some revivals are born of intensive regular prayer for some months or years prior to the revival.

I personally think that the state of prayer in the typical evangelical church is exceedingly lacking and I think this is both a symptom and cause of the current state of the church.

Re: - posted by havok20x, on: 2014/7/10 17:59

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Quote:
-----For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.”

Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.”

It's all weak. WE are weak. Preaching is the worst method of getting a message out.

It's so that God will get glory.

This isn't about pragmatism. This is about obedience.

Re: - posted by dolfan (), on: 2014/7/10 18:18

TMK and Havok, you are onto something. Prayer is more than an ingredient of spreading the good news. I don't know how we can hope to live at all without deeply committing ourselves to Him in our meditations and thoughts. Real intercession seems to be a long term matter.

So, how? Pray, pray, pray. And obey. Obey what? Well, street preaching is one method I guess, and I was last year ready to prepare to do it. I had gone out of my way to find a man who does it and be mentored in it. He wouldn't do it. Seriously. He would not. He is on YouTube and he lives less than an hour from me and when I found him, contacted him and practically yelped like a chihuahua at his feet (via email and phone) for two months, he finally just invited me to leave him alone. I decided, "okay Lord....I will pause."

The idea of friendship evangelism is also out there, but I'm just uncomfortable with anything that is not deliberate and intentional. I don't believe in the just let it happen school of thought. If I just let anything, it ain't gonna happen. :). But, I do believe relationship building is more than a means to getting a salvation badge for my Jesus Troop uniform. Jesus apparently viewed disciple making in a large sweep of relational life. I don't know that we can directly model Him in this, nor that we should, but I don't see an invitation to be saved when He chose them. I see an invitation to join Him in the kingdom and that relationship was long term, involved and full of fits and starts.

But, then we do see the more confrontational and crisis moment approach. Pentecost. Apollos. Paul at Mars Hill. Synagogue confrontations by Paul on his journeys. So, there seems to be flexibility.

Anointing and prayer trump method, apparently. Well, that and being prepared to give an answer for our hope.

This goes back to my question a couple of weeks ago on getting unbelievers to the house gatherings. I sat down today and put together a really short and probably corny flyer that I will discuss with my wife. It says "What do you think of Jesus? Or, do you even really think of Him? If you do NOT claim to be a Christian, if you do NOT go to church or have a lot of church in your background, if you live in this county where churches are everywhere but they may as well be Russian tap dances to you (you weren't planning on going and if anyone invited you, you probably wouldn't go), THEN WE NEED TO DRINK SOME COFFEE AND EAT SOME PIE AT MY HOUSE! We are looking for 6-10 people who would be happy to sit in our living room and talk about this question." And it would give some contact information, etc.

Now, will that work? If the Holy Spirit draws people it will. Because He is the one working, not our methods. Do I feel silly doing something like that? Yes, I do. Would I? Yes I would.

I hope to follow the Holy Spirit in meeting people and building relationships with them and inviting them to join Him in the kingdom and to stay with them in that for the long haul, training them to turn around and do it themselves. Maturing them. Loving them. Equipping and releasing them.

I've never done anything like it, but there is nothing like it to do. He is uniquely worthy of it, uniquely able to do it.

I covet your ideas and feedback...and mostly your prayers.

Re: - posted by dolfan (), on: 2014/7/10 21:03

Our brother, havok kindly and privately pointed out an error in the text of the message as I typed it and posted it. I had stated incorrectly that Johanon killed Ishmael. Ishmael and 8 of his men made it to Ammon from Johanon's interception of Ishmael. It is clearly stated in Jer. 41. and I did state it correctly live last night. But, it is an error. That bears correcting and I did edit the post so no one else may be wrongly informed.

I love this forum because of the Spirit in the fellowship here.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2014/7/10 22:22

Anointing. That is the key. If I am anointed to street preach and I obey it will work. If not it will crash and burn.

The Lord requires preaching the gospel but he does not necessarily demand street preaching; nonetheless we must preach.

Dolphin if your flier is anointed they will come. Personally I like it.

Anointing comes through prayer. If we are in tune with the HS he will inspire us as to method. It might be something very odd.

Several years back my wife worked with a lady who was having some struggles. My wife heard clearly from the HS: "go out at lunch and buy her some shoes." She obeyed then came back and quietly gave the lady the shoes. The lady started crying and showed my wife the bottom of her shoes that had huge holes and they were working outside in cold weather. This led to sharing the gospel.

Not the end of the story. That night I was awakened by my wife having an obvious nightmare. It was her dream but her distress about scared me to death. She says that it was the most horrid awful evil dream she ever had and that as I was shaking her and waking her up she heard a jeering snickering voice saying "that's what you get for buying those f*****g shoes." She was so distraught that the only way she could return to sleep was by singing Christmas carols to herself.

The moral of the story: the HS will lead us but when we obey the enemy hates it. It is a battle no doubt.

Re: - posted by havok20x, on: 2014/7/11 9:17

I am not challenging you, TMK.

Can you show me this concept in Scripture?

Really I am looking for where do we see the concept that if a flyer is anointed (not really sure what that means), that it will work.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2014/7/11 9:37

Anointed to me at least means that God is behind it.

A Bible teacher I listen to says that when he was in HS in late 60s early 70s he would preach Billy Graham sermons in speech class (you could do that back then!). He had them memorized from record albums he had of him preaching. He was saved of course but he said he never saw any results from his classmates.

Then the Jesus Movement revival started rolling across CA where he lived. He went to Chuck Smith's church which was a center point for this revival and he got powerfully baptized in the Spirit.

When he returned to HS and began preaching his Billy Graham sermons in speech class all of a sudden kids were repenting and getting saved. He was in a Christian band and all of a sudden they were seeing kids responding like crazy when they never had before.

Some of the old time preachers would call this "unction."

Jesus said he was anointed to bring good news to the poor. Lk 4:18.

I think far too often we come up with a plan and ask God to bless it. Being anointed means waiting for God to speak and then doing what He says.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2014/7/11 9:44

I found this piece by Spurgeon describing unction:

"One bright benison which private prayer brings down upon the ministry is an indescribable and inimitable something, better understood than named; it is a dew from the Lord, a divine presence which you will recognize at once when I say it is 'an unction from the Holy One.' What is it? I wonder how long we might beat our brains before we could plainly put into words what is meant by preaching with unction; yet he who preaches knows its presence, and he who hears soon detects its absence; Samaria in famine, typifies a discourse without it; Jerusalem, with her feasts of fat things full of marrow, may represent a sermon enriched with it. Everyone one knows what the freshness of the morning is when orient pearls are bound on every blade of grass, but who describe it, must less produce it of itself? Such is the mystery of spiritual anointing; we know, but we cannot tell to others what it is. It is as easy as it is foolish to counterfeit it, as some do who use expressions which are meant to betoken fervent love, but oftener indicate sickly sentimentalism or mere cant. "Dear Lord!" "Sweet Jesus!" "Precious Christ" are by them poured out wholesale, till one is nauseated, if not profane.

Some have tried to imitate unction by unnatural tones and whines; by turning up their eyes, and lifting their hands in a most ridiculous manner. . . Certain brethren aim at inspiration through exertion and loud shouting, but it does not come. . . 'To affect feeling,' says Richard Cecil, 'is nauseous and soon detected, but to feel is the readiest way to the hearts of others.' Uction is a thing which you cannot manufacture, and its counterfeits are worse than worthless; yet it is in itself priceless, and beyond measure needful if you would edify believers and bring sinners to Jesus. To the secret pleader with God this secret is committed; upon him rests the dew of the Lord, about him is the perfume which makes glad the heart. If the anointing we bear come not from the Lord of hosts we are deceivers, and since only in prayer can we obtain it, let us continue instant, constant, fervent in supplication. Let the fleece lie on the threshing-floor of supplication till it is wet with the dew of heaven. Go not to minister in the temple till you have washed in the laver. Think not to be a messenger of grace to others till you have seen the God of grace for yourselves, and had the word from his mouth."

Re: - posted by havok20x, on: 2014/7/11 10:55

I got your meaning now.

I hear people say things like, "Oh that song has an anointing on it." or "I can feel the anointing on you" or something to that effect. And it really bothers me because what they are saying is not what I am reading in Scripture. There is this song called, "Mama's Teaching Angels How to Sing." And its lyrics are good sounding, but they are by no means Christian. And people say there is an anointing on that song. As if we could call down the Spirit of God just by doing this or that thing. It just doesn't work that way.

More often than not, I believe the bible terms what you are talking about as being "with" so and so.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2014/7/11 12:54

Yes-- sometimes when someone says that a song or something had an anointing on it it means that they like it or it has an impact on them emotionally.

That being said it is a somewhat fuzzy concept and even Spurgeon said it was somewhat difficult to define. Paul talked about his preaching was not about wise and persuasive words but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, which is a way of saying his preaching was anointed. The implication is that if his preaching was ONLY wise and persuasive words they would fall flat.

That is why Osteen gags me. He might be a great speaker but its saccharine blechh.

And Tozer kind of had a flat delivery but man was he anointed.