

**Articles and Sermons :: Let Your Heart Be Broken by Rick Ezell****Let Your Heart Be Broken by Rick Ezell - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2015/1/5 14:30**

In 1947, Robert Pierce worked for a religious non-profit organization called Youth for Christ. Its mission was to evangelize the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The young evangelist started toward China with only enough money to buy a ticket to Honolulu. On the trip, he met Tena Hoelkedoer, a teacher. She introduced him to a battered and abandoned child named White Jade. Unable to care for the child herself, she asked Pierce, "What are you going to do about her?" Pierce gave the woman his last five dollars and agreed to send the same amount each month to help the woman care for the child.

Pierce eventually made it to China, where thousands made public commitments as followers of Christ during four months of evangelistic rallies.

While there Pierce saw widespread hunger. He felt intense compassion for these people. Pierce later wrote these words in the flyleaf of his Bible: "Let my heart be broken with the things that break the heart of God." Dragging a movie camera across Asia - China was soon closed - Pierce showed the resulting pictures to church audiences in North America. He asked for money to help children. He showed their faces and begged Christians to "adopt" one. In 1950 he incorporated this personal crusade as World Vision.

In 1959 journalist Richard Gehman wrote that "cannot conceal his true emotions. He seems to me to be one of the few naturally, uncontrollably honest men I have ever met." Pastor Richard Halverson wrote that Pierce "prayed more earnestly and importunately than anyone else I have ever known. It was as though prayer burned within him. . . . Bob Pierce functioned from a broken heart."

Jeremiah, like Bob Pierce, served with a broken heart. He was called the weeping prophet because his heart broke over the plight and condition of his people. His heart ached. As challenging as Bob Pierce's work was to raise money to support needy children, Jeremiah's ministry was even more difficult. He was sent to deliver a hard message - a message that required the people to repent, change, and alter their lives. Then, as now, most people don't respond well to personal messages that require behavioral changes. The typical response is: "Who are you to tell me what to do?" Yet Jeremiah proclaimed this message, and he did it with a tear in his eye.

Jeremiah's mourning prefigured Jesus. In similar manner Jesus wept over people's sin. His heart broke "because they were weary and worn out, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt. 9:36). The ministry of Christ was a tearful ministry. The summary of his ministry was offered by the author of Hebrews, "During His earthly life, He offered prayers and appeals with loud cries and tears to the One who was able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverence" (Hebrews 5:7). His ministry broke his heart and cost him his life.

What breaks your heart?

Before you answer that question, let me inform you what broke Jeremiah's heart, and Jesus' heart, and what should break your heart.

I. Let your heart be broken by turning from your sin. (vv. 5-7a)

God told Jeremiah to say, "Why have these people turned away? Why is Jerusalem always turning away? They take hold of deceit; they refuse to return" (Jer. 8:5). The people in Jeremiah's day had turned away from God, and they refused to repent. They had no desire to return to God, though they had every opportunity to do so. Instead, the people deliberately charged ahead in their sinful practices like a war horse charging into battle, having no idea of the dangers involved.

They should have known better. Jeremiah reminded them that when people fall down, they get up again. If one takes the wrong road, they turn around to get back on the right road. Even birds know when it is time to migrate. People should be as obedient to divine instruction, returning to God when they sin.

One of the great problems in modern Christianity is that we practice confession of sin, but not repentance. We hold fast to 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9), but fail to heed Jesus' words (1 Luke 5:32, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to

repentance" (Luke 5:32). We treat repentance like it is a one-time act, at conversion, and confession is all we need after that. Jesus doesn't want us just to acknowledge our sin, but to turn from our sin. Remember what Jesus said to those he forgave. "Go and sin no more."

We are like children caught in misbehavior saying, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry," only to have them repeat the same mistake again. We do the same thing with God, don't we? How often do you find yourself saying to God, "I'm sorry," only to repeat the same sin over and over again? To turn from the sin is to cease from doing it.

The evangelist Sammy Tippet wrote, "Too many in the West desire to know the manifest love of God without the manifest holiness of God. We have lost the message of repentance. Now the church in the West is the sleeping Giant. The church in the East sends a strong message: The repenters must repent!"

Repentance is a gift of grace. A repentant person is willing to leave his destructive paths as a slave is willing to leave his galley, or a prisoner his dungeon, or a thief his wares, or a beggar his rags. Repentance sets us free.

II. Let your heart be broken by practicing God's Word. (vv. 7b-13)

The roots of Judah's sin were a failure to repent and the rejection of God's word. Jeremiah wrote that God says, "They have rejected the word of the Lord" (Jer. 8:9). The people possessed the Word, but did not practice the Word.

Isn't it interesting that year in and year out the Bible is still a bestseller? But its popularity is not keeping Western society from crumbling morally and spiritually. There appears to be little connection between what people say they believe and the way people act. Could the problem lie in the fact that while we may read God's Word and believe God's Word, we do not practice God's Word? In the words of James, we are to "But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22).

It broke Jesus' heart that the Scribes and Pharisees, the students of the Word, did not practice the Word. They argued and debated the Scriptures but they did not accept and follow its precepts. They had knowledge of the Law but did not apply it.

James reminded us: ". . . humbly receive the implanted word, which is able to save you" (James 1:21). The word receive means "to welcome" or "to come on in." To accept God's Word, first we must welcome the word into our lives. We must give it our full attention. We must be teachable, yielded, humble, and willing to be changed.

When we begin to put God's Word into practice it will change our hearts. We will see people as Jesus saw people. We will hurt as he hurt over the injustices. We will be sensitive to the disenfranchised, lonely, abused, and neglected. We will cry for the lost and dying without him. We will feel deeply about his passion to reach the world.

III. Let your heart be broken by realizing the urgency of the hour. (v. 20)

Jeremiah wrote eloquently, "Harvest has passed, summer has ended, but we have not been saved" (Jer. 8:20). The harvest and the summer were two different seasons. The former was the time for gathering grain. The latter was the time for gathering fruit. If one of these harvests was a failure, the other was usually a success. If both were unsuccessful, stark tragedy stared the people in the face. The proverb speaks of the tragedy of wasted opportunity. It would be said today, "Time's up!" "The party's over." There comes a time when it is too late.

While I know little of farming, I do understand that the farmer has a brief window when the crops are to be harvested before they rot in the fields. The farmer must harvest before it is too late. A sense of urgency is required to bringing in the harvest.

A similar urgency needs must be felt for the harvest of souls. Of the billions of people in the world, it is estimated that over 30 million worldwide will die without Christ each year. And of the over 300 million people in the United States, it is estimated that 41 percent of the people don't go to church at all. Not at Easter, or at Christmas, or to weddings or funerals. And if they were to die they would go to eternal punishment without knowing the love of Christ.

Jesus' heart broke over the harvest when he said, "The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest" (Matt. 9:37-38). He saw the people, saw the clock, and saw the need. His heart broke because time was running out.

The old preacher Vance Havner used to say, "The tragedy of our time is that the situation is desperate but the saints are

not." We are living in desperate times. And desperate times demand action. We live in a lost and broken world desperate for the good news of Jesus Christ.

Three weeks before President John Kennedy was assassinated, he said, "Almost all presidents leave office feeling that their work is unfinished. I have a lot to do, and so little time to do it." As followers of Jesus Christ, we have much work to do and little time to do it. We must give ourselves to it. The times demand urgent action. Remember, the gospel is only good news if it arrives in time.

IV. Let your heart be broken by watching someone self-destruct. (v. 21)

Jeremiah wrote, "I am broken by the brokenness of my dear people. I mourn; horror has taken hold of me" (Jer. 8:21). Jeremiah mourned over the sins of the people. The people were like his child, injured, barely clinging to life. "I mourn" literally means "I am dark" or "black," the color of mourning attire. He was dismayed, which described a wrenching fit, literally being convulsed with agony. Jeremiah was like a parent watching a wayward child destroy his life through wrong choices.

I have a daughter - my only child. I hurt when she hurts. I lose sleep when she is in trouble. I feel pain when she is in pain. I suppose only a parent can know those kinds of emotions. While my daughter is a "good" kid who has made mostly right decisions for which I am grateful, I can only imagine the hurt that some parents feel when they are helpless, watching their wayward child self-destruct.

Jeremiah saw the people of Judah as his very own children. He saw them venturing down the slippery slope of self-destruction. His pain, his wounded heart, was reminiscent of the pain Jesus took upon himself in Gethsemane. Jesus, too, saw the world - the people whom he created and loved - as his own children. When the shock and the burden of the sins of the people took hold of him his sweat turned to blood. We get our word excruciating from the events of Calvary, for the word means "out from the cross." The pain, the hurt, the emotions ran deep. His heart broke excruciatingly because the people he loved were running headlong into destruction.

How often does your heart break for lost friends and the lost world?

V. Let your heart be broken by people refusing the cure. (v. 22)

"Is there no balm in Gilead?" (Jer. 8:22) was a metaphor that his hearers would have easily understood. Jeremiah was looking to the east, toward the restful town of Gilead. It was located in the mountainous region east of the Jordan River and north of Moab. It was famous for its healing ointment made from the resin of a tree of uncertain identity. Gilead was a symbol of hope. It was a city of cure. It was place of remedy.

Jeremiah was saying that a remedy existed for the people's wound - repentance - but they had not applied it. A physician could heal their spiritual sickness - the prophet with God's word - but they refused to consult him.

Do you know any sick people who refuse to take medication or treatment? Do you know any married couples whose marriage is on the rocks, but they refuse to see a counselor? Do you know any employee who could be helped in his or her performance if only they would talk to their supervisor? Do you know any spiritually lost people who know they need to turn to Jesus but refuse to follow him?

A 30-year-old man climbed over the retaining wall at Niagara Falls and jumped into the rapids of Horseshoe Falls. Quickly the rushing currents carried him toward the 173-foot drop. Even if he wanted to, there could be no turning back. The 675,000 gallons of water that plunge over the falls every second hurtled him like a toothpick over the famous Falls.

Incredibly, the man resurfaced at the bottom of the fierce currents. He was conscious and swimming, despite a gash to his head. The force of the falls had torn off his clothes. Very few have ever survived such a fatal plunge. Clinging to a piece of driftwood, he swam 30 feet from the shore. Niagara Police Sgt. Chris Gallagher yelled for him to swim toward shore. The man refused. Letting go of the driftwood he headed in the opposite direction swimming between the ice chunks.

A helicopter flew low over the man and extended a pole, but he did not cooperate. He wrestled a rescue sling from his arm and swam away. Despite the treacherous conditions of ice, high winds, and waves the helicopter made another attempt. The pilot angled the chopper blades to create a wave that would push the man towards the shore.

Rescuers raced against the clock. After 30 minutes in the icy waters the man weakened but remained totally uncooperative. Firefighter Ted Brunning jumped into the river and pulled the perishing man 200 feet to shore.

He was rescued against his will. The authorities conclude the man must not have been thinking right.

Jesus sees more than just one person on a dangerous course. He sees people from every walk of life heading toward the same end. The path of sin does not have a good ending. Despite the well-announced warning of hell ahead people swim on in the swirling current of their sins, unrepentant, with the clock ticking. Time is running out. And, as bizarre as it seems, some perishing people resist rescue. Not everyone wants to be saved from peril. Not everyone wants to abandon the course they are on. Not everyone wants to come to Jesus.

It should break our hearts when we see:

People who are unrepentant.  
People who don't practice God's Word.  
People who don't realize time is running out.  
People who are self-destructing.  
People who refuse the cure.  
Those people break God's heart.

Conclusion

God uses people with broken hearts. Will you let your heart be broken by the things that break God's heart?

I close with a song written by Bryan Jeffery Leech. It is entitled "Let Your Heart Be Broken." May it challenge us to look deep within our own hearts to see what hurts us most.

Let your heart be broken for a world in need.  
Feed the mouths that hunger, soothe the wounds that bleed.  
Give the cup of water, and the loaf of bread.  
Be the hands of Jesus, serving in his stead.

Here on earth applying principles of love.  
Visible expression, God still rules above.  
Living illustration of the living word,  
To the minds of all who've never seen or heard.

Blest to be a blessing, privileged to care.  
Challenged by the need, apparent everywhere.  
Where mankind is wanting, fill the vacant place.  
Be the means through which the Lord reveals His grace.

Add to your believing deeds that prove it true,  
Knowing Christ as Savior, Make Him Master too.  
Follow in His footsteps, go where he has trod.  
In the world's great trouble risk yourself for God.

Let your heart be tender and your vision clear.  
See mankind as God sees, serve Him far and near.  
Let your heart be broken by a brother's pain.  
Share your rich resources, give and give again.