

Christian Duty

“The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground, and keep silence” - Lamentations 2:10

Jeremiah had just witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem and the defeat of Judah at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and now he was revisiting the events that led up to that defeat for our benefit. God warned His people since the call of Abraham of the consequence of sin, *“When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do evil in the sight of the LORD thy God, to provoke him to anger: I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you. And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell”* (Deuteronomy 4:25-28). God's word was despised and neglected by His children. His prophets were stoned, imprisoned, ridiculed and blamed for all calamities of the day. Almost unbelievably, Judah did not repent even after witnessing the brutal destruction of the northern kingdom some 150 years earlier! This manifestation of God's warning visited upon the ten northern tribes became the last overt sign to Judah, and her fate rested in the balance while God waited nearly a century and a half for her to repent.

Judah did not repent. Her kings would not listen, her priests worshipped false gods and her people eagerly sought after false teachings, *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears”* (2 Timothy 4:3). Jeremiah preached during the last 40 years of Judah's existence, crying onto them that God still loved them, *“Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown”* (Jeremiah 2:2). He also

preached that they had committed two sins: first, they stopped using the living word (Bible) and second, they created their own religions supported by their own experiences and findings. Their pride prevented them from believing Jeremiah's God-given words, *“... and all the proud men, saying unto Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely...”* (Jeremiah 43:2). This probably was the cry of the day, that the old teachings were wrong and in need of a breath of fresh air.

Our text points to the source of the problem. It wasn't the kings or the priests or even the general population so much as it was the *“silence”* of the elders. Elders are those who are mature in the word. Often they are depicted as watchmen; those who are to warn others of danger, especially spiritual danger. Jeremiah says that the very individuals, who knew of the apostasy at hand, the elders, did not warn others. Rather, they piously complained to each other of the sin that was running rampant all around them without speaking up to others when God presented them with opportunity after opportunity to preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins. They seemed to speak of sin but were ashamed to speak of repentance because so many people openly rejected this type of doctrine, *“Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause”* (Psalm 25:3).

The events and spiritual condition of man's heart that existed in Judah of old mirror the situation found in our nation and the rest of the world today. It is true that God still loves us in spite of our many sins but, as in Jeremiah's day, He still requires all people to repent and believe the gospel. There are many winds of doctrine blowing about and there are many who get caught up with them to their eternal destruction. Jesus warns us that false prophets and their false doctrines will rise up from within the living church. We are all accustomed to looking elsewhere for attacks but it is within the living church that attacks occur in the end-times and there are elders today who know about it. However, it is easier on the flesh to condemn the sins and false doctrines of the outside world rather than to preach confession of sins to our own congregations, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us*

from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). As in the Old Testament, sins were confessed in front of a priest, so it is today because all believers are part of a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9). James, the brother of Jesus, concurs with the need to confess our sins to a fellow believer, “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16).

To the attitude of letting others teach the truth rather than getting involved ourselves, God gives this warning, *“But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand” (Ezekiel 33:6).*

Fervently pray that God would give you the words to speak; not as what you think or have heard others say or write; and not in part, but in the fullness of the Word as presented in the Bible. It is our Christian duty.

God’s Peace, Charles Korhonen

June 4	Ken Storm	Holy Communion-Meal Following 10am
June 11	Charles Korhonen	
June 18	Ken Storm	Confirmation Service – Potluck Meal following
June 25	Sunday School Picnic	Twin Lakes State Park 10 am. - All Welcome!

TAPIOLA APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN CHURCH
P.O. Box 531
Houghton, MI 49931

Summer Schedule: Church at 10am Bible Study at 7pm on Wednesday.

June 4th will be our first Sunday of the Summer Schedule. Church begins at 10am.

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