Grace Group Guide

9-18-16

Jeremiah 9: 23-24

You don’t have to go far to stumble into a debate regarding the upcoming election. For some people, it’s all they care to talk about, and the reason behind their great concern is the fact that we are at a pivotal point in our nation. As I sit and consider my recollection of past presidents and the things that they’ve done for this country, I certainly see a trend line similar to a landscape view of the Tetons. We’re up, we’re down, we’re up, we’re down. And that trend line isn’t specific to any one of the 5 presidents that have graced the White House in my lifetime. There has always been conflict, there has always been unrest, there have always been disagreements, there have always been agendas. I don’t reckon any of that is going to change after this election is done.

The election is a big deal, however. I’m not trying to downplay that. There is a lot at stake for our nation. There are a lot of unknowns. BUT, as believers, we have a Foundation that will withstand any uncertainty. An Anchor that will hold fast through any storm. We have a sovereign God- I love to remind myself of Proverbs 21:1 in that connection: **“The king’s heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes.”**

Having said all of that, I want to share a text that I think might be beneficial to you as we consider the uncertainty regarding the future of our country. This text actually deals with the uncertainty (at least in the eyes of Israel) of God’s chosen people. Actually, now that I think about it, it wasn’t uncertainty that they were facing – it was calamity. But God gives them a word through the prophet Jeremiah that is meant to be a guide for them through the coming times. That guide directs them to have a ***true*** knowledge of God. We find it in Jeremiah 9:23-24. You heard me preach on this text Sunday, but I want to take a little deeper look at it this evening, utilizing this study from Dave Guzik.

a. **Let not the wise man glory (boast) in his wisdom**: Speaking on behalf of Yahweh, Jeremiah described the things that men normally **glory** in – **wisdom**, **might**, **riches**. Perhaps for a modern age Jeremiah would have added *fame* as a fourth thing that men take **glory in** by nature.

* To **glory** in something is to celebrate it, and to proclaim it as the source of one’s happiness and satisfaction. We think of a champion athlete glorying in the trophy just won. As they hold the trophy high, they proclaim – through their actions, words, facial expressions, everything – *this was my goal, this is my satisfaction, my happiness, and I celebrate it now*. **(Olympics, anyone?)**

b. **But let him who glories glory in this**: God did not rebuke man’s instinct to look for glory; instead, God *guided* that instinct to its proper destination. The problem with man is not that he longs to **glory** in something; the problem is that he generally **glories** in the wrong things, leading to his own hurt, the hurt of others, and most seriously, to offend his Creator.

* “There is a contrast between the three fading glories of verse 23 and the three unfading ones of verse 24: the faithful love, justice, and righteousness which are God’s gifts to us before ever they are his expectations from us.” (Kidner)

c. **Let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me**: God says, “Direct your desire to **glory** in something in the right place – toward Me.” We can take true glory, even the *greatest* glory in the understanding and knowledge of God.

* Kidner on **understands and knows**: “There is a nuance of practical good sense in the Hebrew here for *understand*, while to ‘know’ God means life itself, even to eternity.”
* The false things men take glory in – wisdom, might, riches, fame – are not only misguided, they are *lower*. The greatest glory, the highest aspirations, the greatest exaltation are fulfilled in God and our true understanding and knowledge of Him.
* One way to state the problem of humanity is that it constantly allows itself to be satisfied with these low and lesser glories. In the understanding and knowledge of God are greater **wisdom**, **might**, and **riches** than can be known merely among men.

d. **That I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth**: This understanding and knowledge of God has specific characteristics. It isn’t an unspeakable mystical experience; it is:

· An encounter with His **lovingkindness**, the *hesed* or covenant-love of God to His people.

· An encounter with His **judgment**, His discerning between what is right and wrong.

· An encounter with His **righteousness**, His absolute goodness and purity of moral character.

* “Under such conditions of crisis the only rest which the wise can know is in the *mercy* (*hesed*) and the *righteousness* of God…. *Hesed* is commonly used in the Old Testament of covenant love, hence God is emphasizing His own moral consistency as against the infidelity of His people.”

e. **For in these I delight**: God *delights* in the display of His nature, His character; and when it is known and understood by humanity. It makes Him happy when people know Him as He really is.” – Dave Guzik

**Then what should you glory in?** "Ah, glory in this, Jeremiah, that you know me, and you have available to you the wisdom of God. True wisdom is the wisdom of God, and you can correct your own faulty, frail human wisdom with my wisdom. And you have the might of God at your disposal, greater than anything the world knows anything about, a mighty moral force which is irresistible. And you have riches beyond all compare, the simple riches of love and peace and joy and grace and mercy and truth, which no money can buy. Glory in this, Jeremiah." – Ray Steadman

**Discussion- What part of this study tonight spoke the loudest to you?**

**In what specific ways do these Scriptural truths help us with our concerns about the upcoming election, and our views on the future of our nation?**