***Jeremiah 2:26-37 “As the thief is ashamed when he is found out, So is the house of Israel ashamed; They and their kings and their princes, and their priests and their prophets,
27Saying to a tree, ‘You are my father,’ And to a stone, ‘You gave birth to me.’ For they have turned their back to Me, and not their face. But in the time of their trouble They will say, ‘Arise and save us.’ 28But where are your gods that you have made for yourselves? Let them arise, If they can save you in the time of your trouble; For according to the number of your cities Are your gods, O Judah. 29“Why will you plead with Me? You all have transgressed against Me,” says the Lord. 30“In vain I have chastened your children; They received no correction. Your sword has devoured your prophets Like a destroying lion. 31“O generation, see the word of the Lord! Have I been a wilderness to Israel, Or a land of darkness? Why do My people say, ‘We are lords; We will come no more to You’? 32Can a virgin forget her ornaments, Or a bride her attire? Yet My people have forgotten Me days without number. 33“Why do you beautify your way to seek love? Therefore you have also taught The wicked women your ways. 34Also on your skirts is found The blood of the lives of the poor innocents.
I have not found it by secret search, But plainly on all these things. 35Yet you say, ‘Because I am innocent, Surely His anger shall turn from me.’ Behold, I will plead My case against you,
Because you say, ‘I have not sinned.’ 36Why do you gad about so much to change your way?
Also you shall be ashamed of Egypt as you were ashamed of Assyria. 37Indeed you will go forth from him With your hands on your head; For the Lord has rejected your trusted allies,
And you will not prosper by them.***

***Jer 3:1-5 “They say, ‘If a man divorces his wife, And she goes from him And becomes another man’s, May he return to her again?’ Would not that land be greatly polluted? But you have played the harlot with many lovers; Yet return to Me,” says the Lord. 2“Lift up your eyes to the desolate heights and see: Where have you not lain with men? By the road you have sat for them Like an Arabian in the wilderness; And you have polluted the land With your harlotries and your wickedness. 3Therefore the showers have been withheld, And there has been no latter rain. You have had a harlot’s forehead; You refuse to be ashamed. 4Will you not from this time cry to Me, ‘My Father, You are the guide of my youth? 5Will He remain angry forever? Will He keep it to the end?’ Behold, you have spoken and done evil things, As you were able.”***

We’re back with Jeremiah tonight as he continues his call for repentance in Israel. Babylon is threatening externally and the sin of the nation is threatening internally, but the leaders and the people refuse to acknowledge their sin. They are unashamed unless caught. We pick up in verse 26 tonight.

 Verses 26-28 *“As the thief is ashamed when he is found out, So is the house of Israel ashamed; They and their kings and their princes, and their priests and their prophets, 27Saying to a tree, ‘You are my father,’ And to a stone, ‘You gave birth to me.’ For they have turned their back to Me, and not their face. But in the time of their trouble They will say, ‘Arise and save us.’ 28But where are your gods that you have made for yourselves? Let them arise, If they can save you in the time of your trouble; For according to the number of your cities Are your gods, O Judah.* ***As*** *the thief is ashamed when he is found out* – As a thief is only ashamed when caught, so is Israel. No excuse as they know better. *They and their kings and their princes, and their priests and their prophets –* The very leaders who are in authority and ought to set the example are setting the worst of examples.  *Saying to a tree, ‘You are my father,’ And to a stone, ‘You gave birth to me.* – The leaders and the people give credit to trees, stones, and things manmade. They forget that they are made in God’s image. We engage in this same fiction today when we think that a puddle of mud and a lightning strike eventually evolved to humans, or everything came from nothing with no help from God.  *For they have turned their back to Me, and not their face –* Israel turned it’s back on God. We’re either facing God and back to the world, or we’re back to God facing the world. *But in the time of their trouble They will say, ‘Arise and save us. -*  In their time of calamity, they’ll call to God, not to idols. There’s an old saying, “There are no atheists in foxholes.” In the face of death, foolishness is forgotten.  *But where are your gods that you have made for yourselves? Let them arise, If they can save you in the time of your trouble –* where are the gods of your imagination? Let them deliver you. *; For according to the number of your cities Are your gods, O Judah –* Every city and town had an idol or peculiar god. According to one theologian, there were 30,000 idols and gods at this time. I don’t know this number is correct, but I know one false god is one too many.

 Verses 29-30 “*Why will you plead with Me? You all have transgressed against Me,” says the Lord. 30“In vain I have chastened your children; They received no correction. Your sword has devoured your prophets Like a destroying lion.* ***Why*** *will you plead with Me –* Sin has separated the people from God. They plead as though they have no sin and wonder why calamities rather than blessings come. *In vain I have chastened your children –* God chastened the people to bring them to repentance. They did not receive the correction. No change came. Their hearts remained set on sin. *Your sword has devoured your prophets –* You kill the prophets and imprison the people speaking God’s truth. That sounds much like our country today.

Verses 31-32*“O generation, see the word of the Lord! Have I been a wilderness to Israel, Or a land of darkness? Why do My people say, ‘We are lords; We will come no more to You’? 32Can a virgin forget her ornaments, Or a bride her attire? Yet My people have forgotten Me days without number.* ***O generation****, see the word of the Lord –* Oh wicked generation, hear what God is saying. Consider His words. *Have I been a wilderness to Israel, Or a land of darkness –* God now points out His provision and favors on the nation. He has been light and not darkness; hope and not hopelessness.  *Why do My people say, ‘We are lords; We will come no more to You. –* God’s people now claim to be their own masters and gods within themselves. Pride and self take over. They fail to acknowledge God and His mastery of them. *Can a virgin forget her ornaments, Or a bride her attire? Yet My people have forgotten Me days without number –* People don’t forget what is important to them, like ornaments or pretty clothes; yet, the people have forgotten God. They’re valuing self and stuff more highly than the God that gave them everything. Of course, we’re quick to say – how silly! But, we do all kinds of things for possessions and money, we give time to things that will not last. None of our stuff follows us to heaven. We do better to lay up treasure in heaven, as Christ told us.

Verses 33-34 *Why do you beautify your way to seek love? Therefore you have also taught The wicked women your ways. 34Also on your skirts is found The blood of the lives of the poor innocents. I have not found it by secret search, But plainly on all these things.* ***Why*** *do you beautify your way to seek love –* Why adorn yourself to seek alliances with Egypt and Assyria? The leaders and priests have taught the people their wicked ways. Examples speak louder than words. *Also on your skirts is found The blood of the lives of the poor innocents –* The priests and leaders have the blood of the innocent on them. They are guilty of murder, even if it is murder by tongue. God’s prophets have been killed, His people tortured, imprisoned, even innocent children have been sacrificed to idols.  *I have not found it by secret search, But plainly on all these things –* God didn’t have to search out these things in hiding places. They are out in plain sight. Hanging on the oak trees and posted on the city gates. Wickedness is out in the open, as is the killing of God’s innocents. Israel and Judah are glorying in their wickedness.

Verses 35-36 *Yet you say, ‘Because I am innocent, Surely His anger shall turn from me.’ Behold, I will plead My case against you, Because you say, ‘I have not sinned.’ 36Why do you gad about so much to change your way?Also you shall be ashamed of Egypt as you were ashamed of Assyria.* ***Because*** *I am innocent, Surely His anger shall turn from me –* This verse has a sense of indignation – God is saying, “How dare you claim innocence?” The people say, “God loves me. His anger and judgement will not come against me.” *Behold, I will plead My case against you, Because you say, ‘I have not sinned.’* – God will proceed in His judgement, regardless of the justifications and excuses the people offer.  *Why do you gad about so much to change your way?Also you shall be ashamed of Egypt as you were ashamed of Assyria. –* Why are you seeking protection from Egypt and Assyria, from false gods and idols, when you had God all along.

Verse 37 *Indeed you will go forth from him With your hands on your head; For the Lord has rejected your trusted allies, And you will not prosper by them. –* All the people will find from these unholy alliances is disappointment. The ambassadors will come back confused, their hands on the sides of their heads. In ancient times, hands on the side of the head is a gesture of having been insulted by another party, rejected. But it is God that will reject the allies and will not allow these alliances to prosper.

**Jer 3:1***“They say, ‘If a man divorces his wife, And she goes from him And becomes another man’s, May he return to her again?’ Would not that land be greatly polluted? But you have played the harlot with many lovers; Yet return to Me,” says the Lord.* Deuteronomy 24 makes it clear that when a man divorces a woman, he cannot take her again as his wife. His unfaithfulness to her or her unfaithfulness to him is seen as a pollution in the land. Likewise, is God to be expected to take back His unfaithful people? A man or woman is not inclined to forgive unfaithfulness; yet, God will forgive and take His people back when then repent.

Verse 2*“Lift up your eyes to the desolate heights and see: Where have you not lain with men? By the road you have sat for them Like an Arabian in the wilderness; And you have polluted the land With your harlotries and your wickedness. –* Don’t lift your eyes and wonder if God is charging you with unfaithfulness and idol worship. There doesn’t exist a place in all of the Promised Land that hasn’t been defiled by the sin and idolatry. You have sat by the road, seeking to lure people into wickedness, like the Arabians that hide behind the dunes, keeping watch, and seeking to lure travelers and tradesmen to a place and rob them or seeking an opportunity to rush in and capture them.

Verse 3 *Therefore the showers have been withheld, And there has been no latter rain. You have had a harlot’s forehead; You refuse to be ashamed.* God made it clear in Leviticus 26, and in Deuteronomy 28, that part of the curse for disobedience is to withhold the rains on the lands. Instead of seeing the lack of rain and knowing what is happening, the people set their face in defiance and refuse to acknowledge the sin or be ashamed. We know that pride goes before a fall and a haughty spirit before destruction. This is a picture of pride. The Babylonians are conquering throughout the land and Judah refuses to see the judgement coming.

Verses 4-5 *Will you not from this time cry to Me, ‘My Father, You are the guide of my youth? 5Will He remain angry forever? Will He keep it to the end?’ Behold, you have spoken and done evil things, As you were able.”* ***Will*** *you not from this time cry to Me, ‘My Father, You are the guide of my youth?* God is asking, “Will you not wake up and see what is happening before it’s too late? Won’t you repent and return to Me?” Stop calling trees and stones father and come back to the Father. Seek Me while I may be found. A broken and contrite heart, God will not despise. God wants the people to remember how He led them in their youth, before the idols and false gods. As Christians, we need to remind ourselves of how we followed God in our youth, when we were first saved. We sought Him and talked in desperation with Him. *Will He remain angry forever? Will He keep it to the end?’ –* God is gracious and merciful. When we draw near to Him, He draws near to us. He will not stay angry forever. *Behold, you have spoken and done evil things, As you were able. –* God reminds the people of their wicked speech and actions, not just on occasion, but as often as they were able. He sent prophets. He sent Godly kings, Godly priests, Godly judges to warn the people. He sent pestilence and war to warn the people. Judah even saw their fellow tribes of Israel taken into captivity. They refused to turn and repent. Now the consequences are coming to the very gates of Jerusalem.

And so we leave Jeremiah again tonight. He is calling Judah to repent. But, the times are too good, the money too much, the wickedness too fun. They won’t repent. Likewise, God gives us warnings in this nation and in our personal lives. We must heed what He is saying and turn from the sin. We may not be able to save everyone, but we can be a good example for someone. God is quick to forgive, but our repentance must be sincere. May God give us a heart to pray for this nation and wisdom to seek forgiveness in our personal lives.