

Jeremiah 12-15 • Prophecies and conversations with the Lord

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We're in Jeremiah. Open your Bibles there. We are here on Wednesday evening, studying through the Old Testament and we are currently making our way chapter by chapter and verse by verse through the Old Testament Book of Jeremiah. And we're in the 12th chapter right now and this is a...this is a challenging study, mostly because Jeremiah had a very difficult ministry of calling the Southern Kingdom of Judah to account for their sin and to forewarn them of the impending judgment.

(I need to come up just a little bit, please.) And so anyway, I don't know if you guys remember, but in the last study of Jeremiah, God had made Jeremiah aware of the fact that some of the people in his own town, Jeremiah hailed from the town of Anathoth, and he was made aware of the fact by the Lord that some of the people in his town wanted to kill him if he continued to prophesy in the same way that he was prophesying; which was considered by some people back then to be a traitorous thing to do, because you got all these other prophets, false prophets, who are telling the people everything's going to be fine. Don't worry. Don't worry. We're going to be fine.

And here's Jeremiah, pretty much the lone voice who's saying judgment is coming unless you repent of your sin. You are an evil generation, and you need to get right with God. Well, who wants to hear that when you've got all these other voices going, you're good, you're good?

So, the people of his own town finally decided, got together, talked about it, and said, "Listen, if Jeremiah keeps this up, we're going to kill him. We're going to literally snuff out his life." So, the Lord makes Jeremiah aware of that and so now we come to chapter 12. And this is interesting because, in these coming chapters that we're going to be looking at, Jeremiah is going to have some fairly frank conversations with the Lord.

And I don't know if you ever do that, but I'll be honest with you. I hope you do. You know, we talk a lot about having a relationship with God, and I'm not sure how many of us really have a very personal relationship with God. We have, well, we may have a relationship of some sorts, but I think that it's more formal

for most people. Jeremiah was a man who was willing to talk to God about how he really felt, and I don't think God was ever offended by that.

David was a man who talked to God about how he felt, and I appreciate that when I read these passages. In fact, if you look with me here in Jeremiah chapter 12, it begins with Jeremiah kind of questioning God's justice as to why these people in Anathoth are allowed to even...why God is allowing them to live? It seems is if they want to kill Jeremiah look what he goes on.

He said in verse 1. We're not going to read the whole verse here, right away, but he says, *"^d Righteous are you, O Lord, when I complain to you; yet I would plead my case before you..."* I actually like the way this is rendered better in the NIV. Can I put it on the screen for you so you can see it here? He says,

Jeremiah 12:1a (NIV)

*You are always righteous, Lord,
when I bring a case before you.
Yet I would Speak with you about your justice:*

But you know what? I would speak to you about your justice. And that's really, kind of right, where Jeremiah is at. And I don't know if you've ever felt that way. I have. In fact, when you read about what's going on in our country right now, do you ever think to yourself, and I know some people do because I get emails and notes from folks asking me this, "Why does God allow this to happen? Why does God allow these people to continue? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why doesn't God just snuff them out?"

Which is a great question. And so, I usually pose a question of my own. I say, all right, here's the deal. Imagine that tonight at midnight, God snuffs out all evil. Where would you be? Oh, yeah. Good point. But you know, I mean, we always tend to kind of think of evil as belonging to the other person. You know what I mean? But this is a, this is really a great question. He actually finishes the verse by saying, *"^d...Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive?"*

This is...Jeremiah is not the only Old Testament prophet who was bothered by the existence of evil, in other people, and what appeared to be God's ignorance of it. Not to say that God can never be ignorant about anything, but it seems like God was just neglecting His justice from the standpoint of, you're not doing anything about these guys.

They seem to just thrive. That's what Jeremiah goes on to say. Look at verse 2. He says, “² *You plant them, and they take root; they grow and produce fruit;...*” It's not great fruit. In fact, it's kind of rotten fruit. But it's fruit, nonetheless, and he says, and you know what “*...you are near in their mouth and far from their heart.*”

Isn't that a great phrase? They're talking about You all the time, but they couldn't care less about You and following You and obeying You. And so, here's...this is the problem, this is the issue that Jeremiah is having with the Lord right now. Why are You letting this happen, Lord? Why are You letting this go on?

You know, I have to tell you, in all honesty, I've been troubled by things going on in our country. I've admitted that to you in the last several weeks. I've talked to you about how I've grieved over many of the things going on. And I got to tell you something. Studying through, reading through, and studying through Jeremiah has helped me with this a little bit.

Not just because this has been going on for a long time, and other people who walk with the Lord are struggling with the same sort of thing. But I have learned something from being reminded of these prophecies made through Jeremiah. And here's what I've learned.

The life of evil people is very short, very short, and they have a day. They have a day to thrive and if you see people in this world who are evil and who seem to have bad motives, I just want you to know that, yeah, that's going on. It's really happening and nobody's going to try to pretend that it's not and this is their day. This is their hour.

And when it comes to an end, it's going to come to an end. And it will come to an end. And every one of these people that you and I stress over and worry about and are all concerned about and are wondering, why God isn't doing anything about them? Just like Jeremiah was saying right here, I want to remind you of something.

And this is something that the Lord has reminded me of in His Word. There is coming a day when those very people, those very ones who are making trouble today, there is coming a day when they will get down on their knees and they will declare that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

I'm not necessarily saying they're never going to be saved. I hope they do get saved. But even if they don't, they will still bow the knee to Him one day. And

there's something about that, the knowledge of that, that settles my heart, and I think it ought to do the same for you. There is coming a day. Yes, this is their day.

It's also your day. Just like they're having their day. You're having your day and yet, we spend most of our time fretting about their day and not fulfilling what we've been given to do in our day. Because see, you're alive right now too. If you could take a breath right now and exhale, then that means you're alive.

And that means that you, God still has you on this planet and He still has a purpose for you being on this planet. He has something for you, still to do. So, let's do it. And let's not fret about those who aren't doing it, but are in fact doing the opposite of what we're trying to do. Because believe me, there's coming a day when they will give account to the Lord who created the universe.

And they'll have to give that account to Him, not to us. They're never going to give an account to me, ever. It's to Him they will give an account. And that day is coming. So, it helps, you know, it helps for us to be able just to say, God's got this thing. And nobody is going to escape His notice. No one. And I can leave this thing in His hands.

And lest I become distracted by all that I see going on in this world, Lord help me to remember this is also my day. This is my time to let my light shine, to do the work that God has given me to do, to do it diligently, to do it with all my heart; because I too will stand before God and give an account for how I've lived my life in the light of His presence.

Not for judgment of condemnation, but for judgment of rewards. So, you can see that Jeremiah is quite troubled by this whole thing. And he's kind of talking about the fact that God seems to be ignoring these people. But then in verse 3, this is kind of funny. He says, *“³ But you, O Lord, know me; you see me, and test my heart toward you...”*

And this is kind of Jeremiah's way of saying, you know, you seem pretty focused on me. You seem to be like talking to me all the time about anything that might be happening in my life that is going on, that you're not terribly thrilled about. And so, you're convicting me of things that are causing me to get off track.

And You're letting these guys get away with murder. Here they are over in Anathoth, they're plotting my murder, and You don't even seem to take notice. And yet You're nitpicking every little thing going on in my life. You know, it

was like, I can't get away with anything. I don't know if you've ever felt like Jeremiah.

I think this is actually a little bit more common than we might think. So, look what he prays at the end of verse 3. This is the way he's like, he says, “³...*Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and set them apart for the day of slaughter.* ⁴ *How long will the land mourn and the grass of every field wither?...*”

And he's basically saying, how long is the land of Israel going to be judged because of people like this? Where you withhold the rain and our crops in due season because these people are such sinners and so evil and so forth. He says, “⁴...*For the evil of those who dwell in it the beasts and the birds are swept away, because they said, “He will not see our latter end.”*”

In other words, the people believed, or at least Jeremiah is saying that the people whom God apparently is ignoring seem to think that God is indifferent to their sin. And they may be...they may think that God is indifferent to their sin, but we know better, don't we? We know better, and that's important because that's going to help, that's going to help us to be able to go to sleep at night when our head hits the pillow.

God has got this thing, and He is not indifferent to the lives of men who rail against the purpose of God. God is not indifferent to it. And yes, He will allow them for a short season to express themselves, but eventually, they will answer to Him.

So, here's the Lord's answer to Jeremiah. And you know that our God is the God of all comfort, don't you? I mean, the Bible says that. But I want you...this isn't a tremendously comforting response. In fact, it might even surprise you a little. Look at verse 5. This is God referring now to Jeremiah's complaint.

He says, “⁵ *If you have raced with men on foot, and they have wearied you, how will you compete with horses? (I'll tell you what that means in just a minute.) And if in a safe land you are so trusting, what will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?*” Okay, there you go. It's like, thank You, Lord. Appreciate that.

Basically, what He's telling Jeremiah is if you find your current circumstances troubling and challenging, what are you going to do when things get really bad? That's what He's kind of saying. And you know, you can see that He uses a couple of metaphors to actually get His point across. Did you catch that?

He uses this idea of being wearied on foot and then having to compete with horses. And then if feeling safe in the land, what are you going to do in the thicket of the Jordan and so forth? These metaphors are used to describe the fact that there is going to come a time that is going to be even worse than what he's dealing with now.

You think these guys over in Anathoth who are plotting your murder is a big fat bummer in your life? Oh, just wait. There's a whole lot more difficult stuff coming down the pike. And if you don't stand in faith, you're not going to stand at all. And so, you need to kind of buck up a little bit.

And that kind of sounds a little bit challenging coming from the Lord, but that's essentially what He's saying. What are you going to do? How are you going to manage when things really start to get challenging? The Lord goes on, and notice how He does, verse 6, *“6 For even your brothers and the house of your father, even they have dealt treacherously with you; they are in full cry after you;...”*

He says you think that it's just the men in your hometown that want to kill you? Some of your relatives are in on that whole plot. I'm just here to tell you... What He's saying to Jeremiah is whatever you thought it was, it's worse. It's worse than you thought. Some of your blood relatives want you dead.

And so, He says, *“6...do not believe them, though they speak friendly words to you.”* The Lord goes on, verse 7. *“7 I have forsaken my house; I have abandoned my heritage; I have given the beloved of my soul into the hands of her enemies.⁸ My heritage has become to me like a lion in the forest; she has lifted up her voice against me; therefore I hate her. ⁹ Is my heritage to me like a hyena's lair? Are the birds of prey against her all around? Go, assemble all the wild beasts; bring them to devour.*

¹⁰ Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard; they have trampled down my portion; (By the way, the vineyard is quite often a picture of Israel.) ... (repeats) they have trampled down my portion; they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. ¹¹ They have made it a desolation; desolate, it mourns to me. The whole land is made desolate, but no man lays it to heart.”

It's like, Jeremiah, you think I don't notice these people? Do you think I don't notice? This cries out to me constantly. The Lord is saying, You think I don't hear the voice of evil? Do you think I don't see the result of darkness in the land? I see it. I see it. I know what's going on. I'm not ignorant. I'm not naive. I see what's happening in this land.

“¹² Upon all the bare heights in the desert (verse 12) destroyers have come, for the sword of the Lord devours from one end of the land to the other; no flesh has peace. ¹³ They have sown wheat and have reaped thorns; they have tired themselves out but profit nothing. They shall be ashamed of their harvests because of the fierce anger of the Lord.”

Now, the Lord has just now said to Jeremiah, no, I know what's going on. I see what's going on. And I know what's coming because of it. But now He's going to begin to address the nations. This is the interesting thing in God's Word. When God's people walk in disobedience; He always raises up a nation to come against them as His disciplinary spanking spoon for Israel. And in that case, it's going to be Babylon. And there's even going to be some other nations that will be added in there as well.

But you know, ultimately the Lord always comes back and disciplines those nations for their actions against Israel; because they always go way beyond even what the Lord intended for them to do. And they become vicious and evil in their own ways. And so, God begins to speak now about those who come to take captive the people of Israel.

Listen to what He says in verse 14 and following, *“¹⁴ Thus says the Lord concerning all my evil neighbors who touch the heritage that I have given my people Israel to inherit: (In other words, who touched the land.) “Behold, I will pluck them up from their land, and I will pluck up the house of Judah from among them. ¹⁵ And after I have plucked them up, I will again have compassion on them, and I will bring them again each to his heritage and each to his land.”*

Isn't this interesting in the midst of all this word of judgment, God now takes time to speak of the future; when He will bring His people back home and we know that will be 70 years after they go, actually go, into exile into the Babylonian empire.

But God is saying here, I'm not only going to bring them back, I'm going to bless them in the land, and I'm going to bring them back to where they live. In their homeland once again, verse 16, *“¹⁶ And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, ‘As the Lord lives,’ even as they taught my people to swear by Baal, then they shall be built up in the midst of my people. ¹⁷ But if any nation will not listen, then I will utterly pluck it up and destroy it, declares the Lord.”*

So that's a note for any nation. So, isn't it interesting, as we close out chapter 12, we see that God is already planning? He hasn't even brought judgment upon

Judah yet. He's already planning to return them to the land. He's already talking about it. He's already talking about having mercy on them, showing compassion to them, and bringing them back to the land. And by the way, can I just tell you something? The reason that God sent these people into exile was because of their idolatry.

They had embraced the pagan practices of their neighbors, Baal worship, and all the others. And so, it's kind of interesting. But when you want something bad enough, that is contrary to the Lord. Sometimes the Lord will give it to you. And so, what the Lord did for 70 years is He allowed them to go into exile to the land of Babylon, which was full of paganism.

And they lived there, as exiles, for 70 years in the midst of this intense paganism. And do you know that when they returned to the land 70 years later, they were cured? Israel never dealt with paganism again. They dealt with legalism, big time. Of course, by the time Jesus came along, several hundred years later, he had to deal with that. But the idolatry was gone. The issue with idolatry had been cured. So, the exile, that God fashioned for the Southern Kingdom of Judah truly cured them.

All right, chapter 13 is kind of interesting because the Lord has Jeremiah using some illustrations or acting out some illustrations. He does this also with Ezekiel. But sometimes when people aren't listening to the prophecy, God would call upon the prophet to act something out; because of course, it would always pique people's curiosity and He'd get them to do...Oh, Ezekiel was asked to do weird things and I mean, weird things.

And Jeremiah is asked to do something just a little bit weird too, but it...again, it just kind of piques people's interest because everybody loves a story, right? And so, it begins in verse 1 by saying, *"¹ Thus says the Lord to me, "Go and buy a linen loincloth and put it around your waist, and do not dip it in water."* Now let me stop long enough to say that if you have a different Bible translation you're looking at, your Bible might say belt or it might say linen sash, depending on what you have on your lap, instead of loincloth.

And frankly, I like that better. We think of loincloth as something like Tarzan wore, and it doesn't give us the right picture at all; because what they're talking about was literally a belt that they would wear around the waist and this was not something that necessarily the common man always wore, sometimes, but a linen belt spoke of part of the priestly garment.

And it actually projected a kind of dignity to wear such a thing. So, He tells him to go out and purchase this linen belt, or sash, and to and to put it on, but don't get it wet. And He says in verse 2, ² *So I bought a loincloth according to the word of the Lord, and put it around my waist.* ³ *And the word of the Lord came to me a second time,* ⁴ *“Take the loincloth that you have bought, which is around your waist, and arise, go to the Euphrates and hide it there in a cleft of the rock.”* ⁵ *So I went and hid it by the Euphrates, as the Lord commanded me.*

⁶ *And after many days (we don't know how many) the Lord said to me, “Arise, go to the Euphrates, and take from there the loincloth that I commanded you to hide there.”* ⁷ *Then I went to the Euphrates, and dug, and I took the loincloth from the place where I had hidden it. And behold, the loincloth was spoiled; it was good for nothing.”*

So, it got ruined by the elements, okay. So, this is all a picture. This is like a parable. It's really very similar to the kind of parables that Jesus would tell, except the prophet is having to act these things out.

⁸ *Then the word of the Lord (he says) came to me: (And then verse 9)* ⁹ *“Thus says the Lord: Even so (He's now going to give the meaning of this parable.) will I spoil the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem.* ¹⁰ *This evil people, who refuse to hear my words, who stubbornly follow their own heart and have gone after other gods to serve them and worship them, shall be like this loincloth, which is good for nothing.*

¹¹ *For as the loincloth clings to the waist of a man, so I made the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah cling to me, declares the Lord, that they might be for me a people, a name, a praise, and a glory, (And then this is the important part), but they would not listen.”* All right. So, he's...Jeremiah does this in front of the people.

And you can imagine people probably...they knew he was a prophet. They probably followed him out to the Euphrates, watched him hide this loincloth or this belt in the rocks near the Euphrates, and then they watched him go out there and get it and noticed that it had been ruined, and then seeing that, Jeremiah was then able to give this prophetic word, and the people were able to see that they were like that belt that had been ruined.

Verse 12. Another illustration. ¹² *You shall speak to them this word: ‘Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, “Every jar shall be filled with wine...”’* Now, let me pause and let me stop for just a moment. Because what He's...the Lord, is

telling Jeremiah to say was a common proverb of the day, people would say that they would say...every jar shall be filled with wine.

And it was a proverb that was meant to convey the idea that every purpose of God will be fulfilled, because jars were made to be filled with wine. That's what they made them for, and so to say, every jar will be filled with wine, was to say, every purpose will be played out. Every purpose will be fulfilled.

So, it's a way of saying you...we might say, everything that God has purposed will come to pass. Okay. We would say it just right out. Well, they said it in a proverbial kind of a statement. All right. So, He's, the Lord, is telling them to say that every jar will be filled with wine. Now, we're still in verse 12, “¹²...and they, (the people) *will say to you, ‘Do we not indeed know that every jar will be filled with wine?’*”

In other words, God tells Jeremiah that people are going to say to him, we know that. We use that proverb all the time. Of course, every jar is going to be filled with wine. And you see, that was kind of a... that was what the false prophets were actually saying. Because this is an optimistic thing to say. Every jar will be filled with wine. Every purpose of God will be achieved. It sounds very positive, doesn't it? Yeah. Alright. But God's going to say, “Yeah, but My purpose and what you believe is My purpose are two different things.”

Look what He says in verse 13. “¹³ *Then you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord: Behold, I will fill with drunkenness all the inhabitants of this land: the kings who sit on David's throne, the priests, the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And I will dash them one against another, fathers and sons together, declares the Lord. I will not pity or spare or have compassion, that I should not destroy them.’*”

So, God is saying through Jeremiah, it's true. This proverb, you guys like to say, that all the purposes of God are going to eventually have their way. Yeah, it's true. But what you don't know...you don't know what My purpose is. My purpose is to bring destruction; because of your sin, and because of your rebellion, and because of your wickedness, and because you refuse to heed My voice.

Verse 15 “¹⁵ *Hear and give ear; be not proud, for the Lord has spoken. ¹⁶ Give glory to the Lord your God before he brings darkness, before your feet stumble on the twilight mountains, and while you look for light he turns it into gloom and makes it deep darkness. ¹⁷ But if you will not listen, my soul will weep in*

secret for your pride; my eyes will weep bitterly and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock has been taken captive.

¹⁸ Say to the king and the queen mother: "Take a lowly seat, (In other words, humble yourself) for your beautiful crown has come down from your head." ¹⁹ The cities of the Negeb are shut up, with none to open them; all Judah is taken into exile, wholly taken into exile. ²⁰ "Lift up your eyes and see those who come from the north.

(That's where the Babylonians were coming from.) Where is the flock that was given you, your beautiful flock? ²¹ What will you say when they set as head over you those whom you yourself have taught to be friends to you? Will not pangs take hold of you like those of a woman in labor? ²² And if you say in your heart, 'Why have these things come upon me?' it is for the greatness of your iniquity that your skirts are lifted up and you suffer violence."

To have a skirt lifted up, it's a term they would use to expose someone's shame. Okay, that's the best way I can put it. *"²³ Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil. ²⁴ I will scatter you like chaff driven by the wind from the desert. ²⁵ This is your lot, the portion I have measured out to you, declares the Lord, because you have forgotten me and trusted in lies.*

²⁶ I myself will lift up your skirts over your face, (And again, there's that proverbial statement describing to expose one's shame. And that's why he says,) and your shame will be seen. ²⁷ I have seen your abominations, your adulteries and neighings, your lewd whorings, (He's talking about their pagan religious practices) on the hills in the field. Woe to you, O Jerusalem! How long will it be before you are made clean?"

Wow! You can see what's going on. The heart of the Lord and the desire to see their lives change. But He says, just as the Ethiopian can't change his skin and the leopard can't change his spots. You can't change. You are just as helpless to change your ways and you are continuing on in your way.

Let's try to do one more chapter, but I have to get a drink of something here. Getting kind of dry. Okay. Chapter 14. This is all centered around a drought that began to take hold of the land. Okay. So, there's a terrible drought, which is, of course, is a sign to people that they have gone astray.

And it says, *"¹ The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah concerning the drought: ² "Judah mourns, and her gates languish; her people lament on the*

ground, and the cry of Jerusalem goes up. ³ Her nobles send their servants for water; they come to the cisterns; they find no water; they return with their vessels empty; they are ashamed and confounded and cover their heads. ⁴ Because of the ground that is dismayed, since there is no rain on the land, the farmers are ashamed; they cover their heads. ⁵ Even the doe in the field forsakes her newborn fawn because there is no grass. ⁶ The wild donkeys stand on the bare heights; they pant for air like jackals; their eyes fail because there is no vegetation.”

And now Jeremiah goes on to express the confession of the...of, well, what should be the confession of the people. He says, “⁷ (Through our, excuse me) *Though our iniquities testify against us, act, O Lord, for your name's sake; for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against you.* ⁸ *O you hope of Israel, its savior in time of trouble, why should you be like a stranger in the land, like a traveler who turns aside to tarry for a night?* ⁹ *Why should you be like a man confused, like a mighty warrior who cannot save? Yet you, O Lord, are in the midst of us, and we are called by your name; do not leave us.*”

And the Lord responds in verse 10, “¹⁰ *Thus says the Lord concerning this people: “They have loved to wander thus; they have not restrained their feet; therefore the Lord does not accept them; now he will remember their iniquity and punish their sins.”* ¹¹ *The Lord said to me: “Do not pray for the welfare of this people.* ¹² *Though they fast, I will not hear their cry, and though they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I will not accept them. But I will consume them by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence.”*”

And now they, Jeremiah and the Lord, begin to have a conversation about the false lying prophets in the land. “¹³ *Then I said: “Ah, Lord God, behold, the prophets say to them, ‘You shall not see the sword, nor shall you have famine, but I will give you assured peace in this place.’”* ¹⁴ *And the Lord said to me: “The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds.*”

¹⁵ *Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who prophesy in my name although I did not send them, and who say, ‘Sword and famine shall not come upon this land’: By sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed.* ¹⁶ *And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem, victims of famine and sword, with none to bury them—their wives, their sons, and their daughters. For I will pour out their evil upon them.*”

(And then, verse 17 and following, Jeremiah weeps for the people.)

“¹⁷ You shall say to them this word: ‘Let my eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease, for the virgin daughter of my people is shattered with a great wound, with a very grievous blow. ¹⁸ If I go out into the field, behold, those pierced by the sword! And if I enter the city, behold, the diseases of famine! For both prophet and priest ply their trade through the land and have no knowledge.’” ¹⁹ Have you utterly rejected Judah? Does your soul loathe Zion? Why have you struck us down so that there is no healing for us? We looked for peace, but no good came; for a time of healing, but behold, terror.

²⁰ We acknowledge our wickedness, O Lord, and the iniquity of our fathers, for we have sinned against you. ²¹ Do not spurn us, for your name's sake; do not dishonor your glorious throne; remember and do not break your covenant with us. ²² Are there any among the false gods of the nations that can bring rain? Or can the heavens give showers? Are you not he, O Lord our God? We set our hope on you, for you do all these things.”

Boy, kind of like too little too late, you know, this word of repentance, this word of confession, coming too late.

Chapter 15. *“¹ Then the Lord said to me, “Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my heart would not turn toward this people. Send them out of my sight, and let them go! ² And when they ask you, ‘Where shall we go?’ you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Those who are for pestilence, to pestilence, and those who are for the sword, to the sword; those who are for famine, to famine, and those who are for captivity, to captivity.””*

Wow, this is a pretty crazy two verses. God says, even if Moses and Samuel were to intercede for these people, I wouldn't listen. Moses was famous for his intercession (Referring to **Exodus 32 ESV**). When God conveyed to Moses, the depth of the sin of the people of Israel, while he was up on the mountain. Moses cried out to God. We even...after God said, “I'm going to kill them all and I'll start over with you, Moses.” Moses said, “Oh, Lord, what are the...what are your enemies going to say? What are the Egyptians going to say? You brought them out into the desert just to kill them.” And he appealed for the name of the Lord and God relented.

And Samuel (referring to **1 Samuel 7 ESV**), who cried out for the Nation of Israel. Even when they wickedly desired a king, and yet God says here, even if Moses and Samuel stood before me and cried out for the Southern Kingdom of Judah, He says, “I would not turn away from what I have planned for these people.”

Verse 3 says, “³ I will appoint over them four kinds of destroyers, declares the Lord: the sword to kill, the dogs to tear, and the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth to devour and destroy. ⁴ And I will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth because of what Manasseh the son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, did in Jerusalem.”

You guys probably remember Manasseh (referring to **2 Chronicles 33 ESV**), probably the worst of all the kings of Judah, the son of Hezekiah. And yet, God showed mercy to Manasseh himself. Manasseh actually was a horrific king, but he repented, at the end of his life and God restored him. It's an incredible story of mercy, and yet the seeds that Manasseh sowed among the people of the Southern Kingdom of Judah were so evil and so long lasting that God said it finally came to judgment.

Verse 5, “⁵ Who will have pity on you, O Jerusalem, or who will grieve for you? Who will turn aside to ask about your welfare? ⁶ You have rejected me, declares the Lord; you keep going backward, so I have stretched out my hand against you and destroyed you— I am weary of relenting. ⁷ I have winnowed them with a winnowing fork in the gates of the land; I have bereaved them; I have destroyed my people; they did not turn from their ways.

⁸ I have made their widows more in number than the sand of the seas; I have brought against the mothers of young men a destroyer at noonday; I have made anguish and terror fall upon them suddenly.⁹ She who bore seven has grown feeble; she has fainted away; her sun went down while it was yet day; she has been shamed and disgraced. And the rest of them I will give to the sword before their enemies, declares the Lord.”

Now Jeremiah speaks. He says, “¹⁰ Woe is me, my mother, that you bore me, a man of strife and contention to the whole land! I have not lent, nor have I borrowed, yet all of them curse me.” The Lord responds to him here, saying, “¹¹ The Lord said, “Have I not set you free for their good? Have I not pleaded for you before the enemy in the time of trouble and in the time of distress?”

God is saying to Jeremiah that he would not be forsaken even in the midst of all the judgment. Jeremiah was sick of this whole thing. He was sick of it. He was sick of all the things that he had to say, to Judah about their sin. And yet the Lord says, I will not forsake you for being faithful to me.

And then verse 12 is an interesting verse. He says, “¹² Can one break iron, iron from the north, and bronze?” And that seems to suggest that, you know, there's nothing that can withstand the power that's coming from the north, referring to

the Babylonians. But the Lord goes on to speak here, and these are interesting words.

He says, *“¹³ Your wealth and your treasures I will give as spoil, without price, for all your sins, throughout all your territory. ¹⁴ I will make you serve your enemies in a land that you do not know, for in my anger a fire is kindled that shall burn forever.”*

Now, as we go on in verse 15, Jeremiah prays for himself and he begins to call out to the Lord, reminding the Lord of how he served Him, even when it was unpopular, even when the message he'd been given was one of great difficulty.

He says, *“¹⁵ O Lord, you know; remember me and visit me, and take vengeance for me on my persecutors. In your forbearance take me not away; know that for your sake I bear reproach. ¹⁶ Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O Lord, God of hosts.”*

Do you see what Jeremiah is doing? He's telling the Lord, when the Babylonians come, don't take me, spare me, because I've been faithful. You gave me Your word, and I rejoiced over it, and I gave it to the people, and I didn't hold back. I told them what you told me to say, and so I'm asking you to remember me, and I'm saying, Lord, when they come to take the people captive, please spare my life. We're going to see at the end of Jeremiah, that's exactly what God did. Jeremiah did not get taken in the Babylonian captivity.

Verse 17, *“¹⁷ I did not sit in the company of revelers, nor did I rejoice; I sat alone, because your hand was upon me, for you had filled me with indignation. ¹⁸ Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Will you be to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail? (In other words, will you let me get swept up in all of this judgment as well?)*

¹⁹ Therefore thus says the Lord: (Verse 19) “If you return, I will restore you, and you shall stand before me. If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless, you shall be as my mouth. They shall turn to you, but you shall not turn to them. ²⁰ And I will make you to this people a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you, but they shall not prevail over you, for I am with you to save you and deliver you, declares the Lord. ²¹ I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked, and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless.”

The reason I read that last verse a little more slowly than the rest is because I believe with all my heart that is the birthright of every believer, every child of God, and all who desire to be faithful to the Lord with their lives.

God says, *“²¹ I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked...”* Doesn't mean you're not going to see the hand of the wicked. Doesn't mean you're not even going to experience some form of the hand of the wicked. But God says, (paraphrasing) “I will deliver you out of their hand and I will redeem you from their grasp.” I truly believe this is the heart of God, the heart of the Father, toward his children.

And I believe this is a message for all of His children, for us to take heart and to know that it is God's desire to redeem us and deliver us from the hand of the wicked. So, we're going to stop there.