

Jeremiah 18-21 • Opposition mounts, the Babylonians arrive

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Chapter 18 begins with another word from the Lord to Jeremiah. In fact, that's the way the chapter begins. ¹ *The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord:* (but he says this time,) ² *“Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear[a] my words.”* ³ *So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at his wheel.* ⁴ *And the vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to do.”*

In other words, what the Lord is allowing Jeremiah to see is the potter fashioning a jar, or some kind of a container, out of clay. But the clay wasn't responding to the potter's hand as he wanted it to and so, he decided to basically start again and just begin with the same lump of clay from scratch. And you guys probably all know what that's all about from whether some of you ever worked with clay or even played with Play-Doh, frankly, to just kind of start over again. You can kind of see what's going on here. The Lord has a message through what Jeremiah has seen.

It says, ⁵ *“Then the word of the Lord came to me:”* ⁶ *“O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? declares the Lord. Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.”* And so, the Lord asks an important question through Jeremiah to the people saying, essentially, can I not do with you as I choose?

And this is God's way of simply saying, am I not sovereign? Am I not sovereign to act as I see fit and according to the purpose of my will? And the picture that is being set up in this message from the Lord is about what He's going to do with the sin problem that is going on there in the Southern Kingdom of Judah, among the people there.

And, in fact, how God may respond to any nation, as the sovereign eternal God. He goes on in verse 7 to kind of explain now what He means. He says, ⁷ *“If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it,”* ⁸ *and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it.* (**Note:**

Pastor Paul skips over the following verses: *⁹ And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, ¹⁰ and if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will relent of the good that I had intended to do to it.*”) And that includes any nation.

We saw this played out dramatically in the Book of Jonah (referring to **Jonah 1-2 ESV**). Where Jonah was told to go to a nation that was actually quite against the Jews, the Assyrian Empire in the capital city of Nineveh, and to go there and proclaim that God had decreed disaster for that city unless they repent.

And Jonah, of course, didn't want to go that's why the whole Jonah and the fish thing came along. He didn't want to go. He tried to get away and you can't get away from God. But the point is, Jonah knew that if they responded positively to the message of the Lord, that God would relent from bringing disaster and he didn't want God to relent.

He wanted God to nuke them, frankly. He just a soon, that fire and brimstone fall from heaven and there's a little ash heap where Nineveh used to be. And so he's like, I'm not going to go give them that message because they might just repent and they are our enemies. But God had mercy upon those people and they did repent and God relented from bringing the disaster, at least for a period of time, that He had intended to bring upon it (referring to **Jonah 3-4 ESV**).

And He goes on now in verse 11 to say, *“¹¹ Now, therefore, say to the men of Judah (and that's the Southern Kingdom of Israel) and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: ‘Thus says the Lord, Behold, I am shaping disaster against you and devising a plan against you. Return, every one from his evil way, and amend your ways and your deeds.’”*

So, the Lord even uses this picture of the shaping of clay to say, I am shaping your judgment and it is coming. Verse 12, *“¹² But they say, ‘That is in vain! We will follow our own plans, and will every one act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.’ ¹³ “Therefore thus says the Lord: Ask among the nations, Who has heard the like of this? The virgin Israel has done a very horrible thing. ¹⁴ Does the snow of Lebanon leave the crags of Sirion? Do the mountain waters run dry, the cold flowing streams?”* The Lord is citing here things that are consistent and reliable.

He says in verse 15, *“¹⁵ But my people (so here's the contrast to reliable and consistent.) my people (he says,) have forgotten me; they make offerings to false gods; they made them stumble in their ways, in the ancient roads, and to walk*

into side roads, not the highway, ¹⁶ making their land a horror, a thing to be hissed at forever. Everyone who passes by it is horrified and shakes his head.

¹⁷ Like the east wind I will scatter them before the enemy. I will show them my back, not my face, in the day of their calamity.” We'll see that played out here as we get a couple of chapters further.

“¹⁸ Then they said, “Come, let us make plots against Jeremiah, for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, let us strike him (look at this) with the tongue, and let us not pay attention to any of his words.” Notice their plan is to strike Jeremiah, at this point, with the tongue. Isn't that interesting? So their strategy is one of slander and character assassination and of course, that's a strategy that's still used today.

We see it happening in our American politics all the time. Slander and character assassination is a very...is used because it's a very effective tool, frankly. It works very well. Have you ever noticed something interesting about human nature? We're prone, it seems, to believe the worst about someone, even though we don't truly know the facts.

If somebody accuses someone else of some horrible sin or act, we are prone to believe it. Even though we know that the human heart is deceitful, we know that people will lie to get their way. We know that. Good grief, we've done it. And yet, we are quick to believe the worst. And that's why character assassination is such an effective tool, and that's what they're planning to do against Jeremiah.

So, Jeremiah begins to offer up a prayer concerning his enemies, and by the way, we'll tell you ahead of time, this is called an imprecatory prayer. We read a lot that are very much like this in the Psalms. I'll explain in a moment. He says, *“¹⁹ Hear me, O Lord, and listen to the voice of my adversaries.”* (In other words, listen to what they're saying.)

“²⁰ Should good be repaid with evil? Yet they have dug a pit for my life. Remember how I stood before you to speak good for them, to turn away your wrath from them.” In other words, Jeremiah is saying, I gave them this message so they would turn and not have to experience your wrath; and yet they're now, they're mad at me because I was basically telling them there's a way out if you'll just take it. And yet, they get mad at me for telling them the way out.

Isn't that what it's like when we share the gospel with people today? We're telling them how they can avoid the wrath of God. We go to somebody and we say, hey listen, the wrath of God is coming against all the sin of mankind, but

Jesus paid the price of that wrath for those who will turn to Him in faith and accept the work that He did on the cross.

Do you want to do that? Do you want to get rid of the wrath of God, as it relates to your personal life, and be able to avoid all of that stuff? And they're like, get out of here! And then they begin to persecute and say things and do things. It's like, what's going on? What's up with this? It's really interesting, isn't it?

So Jeremiah is telling the Lord to take note of this fact. He says in verse 21, *“²¹ Therefore deliver up their children to famine; give them over to the power of the sword; let their wives become childless and widowed. May their men meet death by pestilence, their youths be struck down by the sword in battle. ²² May a cry be heard from their houses, when you bring the plunderer suddenly upon them! For they have dug a pit to take me and laid snares for my feet. ²³ Yet you, O Lord, know all their plotting to kill me. Forgive not their iniquity, nor blot out their sin from your sight. Let them be overthrown before you; deal with them in the time of your anger.”* Amen. There's the prayer.

And as we said, it's called an imprecatory prayer. David prayed, these types of prayers, many times we saw them throughout our study of the Psalms, and it is basically asking...someone who's asking God to deliver them from their enemies. But the reason we call them imprecatory prayers is because that comes from the word imprecate, which means to invoke or to call down curses on your enemies. To call down evil, literally upon one's enemy.

And, you know, it's frankly not something we're encouraged to do in the New Testament. We're told to love our enemies, to bless those who misuse us and persecute us, and so forth. But it is something that we did see quite often in the Old Testament.

Chapter 19, this also contains a message from the Lord that is given by example. And it says, *“¹ Thus says the Lord, “Go, buy a potter's earthenware flask, (Earthenware, of course, just means made from the earth, so it would be made out of clay.) and take some of the elders of the people and some of the elders of the priests, ² and go out to the Valley of the Son of Hinnom at the entry of the Potsherd Gate, and proclaim there the words that I tell you.”*

And I want you to just kind of take note of what is being said here. The Lord tells Jeremiah to gather these individuals, these elders of the people, and to take them out to the valley of the son of Hinnom and this would be called the Valley of Ben Hinnom. It was used ultimately as a garbage dump. But earlier, it was a

place where people, the Jews, actually set up a shrine to sacrifice their children to the God Molech and they would sacrifice them in the fire.

And frankly, it was during the king of...the reign of King Josiah, that the shrine of Molech was destroyed there in the valley of Ben Hinnom. And they began to use the area, at that time, simply for the burning of garbage. And also, they would cremate the bodies of criminals. So, it was considered to be an unclean and defiled place. But after Josiah, the worship of Molech was started up once again, and the sacrifices that took place there.

We don't know how many. They may have been few and far between. We don't really know how many happened there but obviously, they happened because the Lord confronted the people with it and you'll hear in these things how He felt about it. Here's the message the Lord had for the people that Jeremiah had brought out to the valley of Ben Hinnom.

Verse 3, “³ You shall say, ‘Hear the word of the Lord, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I am bringing such disaster upon this place that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. ⁴ Because the people have forsaken me and have profaned this place by making offerings in it to other gods whom neither they nor their fathers nor the kings of Judah have known; and because (look at this) they have filled this place with the blood of innocents, (And that speaks of the sacrifices of their children) ⁵ and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, which I did not command or decree, nor did it come into my mind—”

God is saying, I never once dreamed of such a horrific thing. “⁶ therefore, behold, days are coming, declares the Lord, when this place shall (be no more, shall, excuse me) no more be called Topheth, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but (rather) the Valley of Slaughter.” Now, you might notice there in verses 5, or actually, it's in verse 5, that the Lord confronts them of building high places to Baal and offering their sons in the fire as offerings to Baal and I told you that was also the worship of Molech. It's actually later on in the Book of Jeremiah where we see the connection between Baal and Molech. Let me show you from Jeremiah chapter 32 up on the screen. It says,

Jeremiah 32:35 (ESV)

They built the high places of Baal in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to offer up their sons and daughters to Molech, though I did not command them, nor did it enter into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.

So, you'll notice the connecting point between the high places of Baal and the offering of their sons to Molech. So, these pagan sacrifices were so grievous to the Lord that He declared that place that was just once, just a valley, and then later became a dump, a garbage dump, would then be called down the road, the Valley of Slaughter.

And the reason for that is because so many people would be denied burial and they would be thrown there for lack of a place to bury them because they'd been slaughtered by their enemies. And that's what the Lord, kind of, goes on to say in verse 7. *“⁷ And in this place I will make void the plans of Judah and Jerusalem, and will cause their people to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hand of those who seek their life. I will give their dead bodies for food to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the earth.*

⁸ And I will make this city a horror, a thing to be hissed at. Everyone who passes by it will be horrified and will hiss because of all its wounds. ⁹ And I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and their daughters, and everyone shall eat the flesh of his neighbor in the siege and in the distress, with which their enemies and those who seek their life afflict them.”

And that in fact did come to pass, *“¹⁰ Then you shall break the..”* (Okay, now He's telling Jeremiah) *“¹⁰ Then you shall break the flask (that you brought out there with you) in the sight of the men who go with you, ¹¹ and shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts: So will I break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter's vessel, so that it can never be mended. Men shall bury in Topheth because there will be no place else to bury.’”*

And of course, it refers again to that place as Topheth, which was its original name in that valley. *“¹² Thus will I do to this place, declares the Lord, and to its inhabitants, making this city (Now He refers to Jerusalem. He's saying it will be...) like Topheth.”* In the fact that there will be people who will be slaughtered and unburied. Terrible, terrible, terrible judgment.

“¹³ The houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah—all the houses on whose roofs offerings have been offered to all the host of heaven, and drink offerings have been poured out to other gods—shall be defiled like the place of Topheth.”

¹⁴ Then Jeremiah came from Topheth, where the Lord had sent him to prophesy, and he stood in the court of the Lord's house and said to all the people: ¹⁵ “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, behold, I am bringing upon this city and upon all its towns all the disaster that I have (promised or excuse

me...) *pronounced against it, because they have stiffened their neck, refusing to hear my words.*”

And I want to give the emphasis again on that last statement of this chapter 19 because that is important. It is very easy for us to read through the Bible in books like Jeremiah, which is, you know, largely a book of judgment and a very difficult book to read and even to study and to come away with the conclusion, God judged them for their sin, and ultimately that is true. But God continues to say, it's not just the fact that you sin, because we all sin, we know that. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

The ultimate issue here with these people, and with all people for that matter before God, that gets them into trouble is not the fact that they sin, it's the fact that when they're confronted with their sin, they stiffen their neck and they refuse to listen to God. That's the key.

David was a man after God's own heart who did some pretty incredible sinning. I mean, big sinning, rotten sinning. The kind of sinning that could cause you to lose your life, okay. So, why did David continue to be a man that God favored? It's because he didn't stiffen his neck. When confronted with his sin, he responded. Yes, Lord, you are right. Busted. I did it. I was wrong. I deserve to die.

Right? That's actually what he said when he was confronted with his sin, I deserve to die. I deserve death. So, and he was right, and yet God forgave him because he did not stiffen his neck. He did not refuse to hear the words of the Lord and I...and it's such an important thing to remember Christians, that as you walk through your life in Christ, and falter; because we all falter in many ways, and there are besetting sins that are faltering and then there are just daily faltering that...that we experience getting angry, getting jealous, just being stupid.

You know, that is not going to bring about the wrath of God in your life because, if your heart is soft and you respond to the Holy Spirit and the conviction of God's Spirit, there's always going to be a perpetual cleansing work of God in your life. We need to remember that.

So many people get hung up on, is this a sin? Is that a sin? And I get all the questions like that all the time. Pastor Paul, is it a sin to such and such? Is it a sin to do this? Is it a sin to do that? And they're getting caught up on sins; which are kind of like all of the options that are out here (points to crowd) and they're not thinking about the heart, which is in here (points to heart).

And so, instead of focusing on the heart, they're focusing on, is this going to be a sin? And then they'll even kind of say, well, I know it's okay to go to this spot, but what if I put one foot over that line? Is that going to be a sin? And if so, how bad? You're asking the wrong questions. You know? The questions that really ought to be asked have to do with our relationship with Jesus and our desire to serve Him, our love for Him, and our desire to walk according to His purpose in our lives.

And simply, you know what God says elsewhere? (referring to **Isaiah 66:2 ESV**) He says, I'm looking for people who will tremble at My Word. That's really important to the Lord. Not that you live perfect lives. We're not going to live perfect lives this side of heaven. God's going to be delighted, though, if you'll tremble at His Word all the days of your life. If you...if His Word is the thing that gets your attention when He speaks it. If you listen and you respond, that's where God really cares.

All right, Jeremiah chapter 20 begins to outline some of the active opposition that Jeremiah began to receive as a result of all of these messages that he's been given now. So we're, you know, we're moving along here and it tells us in verse 1, *“¹ Now Pashhur the priest, the son of Immer, who was chief officer in the house of the Lord, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things. ² Then Pashhur beat Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the upper Benjamin Gate of the house of the Lord.”*

Don't put it in your mind like, Pashur came out with a stick and started beating him. He had his...probably his temple soldiers, guards come out and they grabbed Jeremiah and they probably tied him to a post or something and beat him and then put him in stocks; which would have been a very painful, very humiliating thing for Jeremiah to endure because they didn't let him, we're going to find out, they didn't let him out of those stocks until the next day.

We don't know what time of the day it was when they put him in there, but just kind of just think about what that would be like to be put in stocks; because you'd be put in stocks in a very public location where people would walk by and see you. Oh, and by the way, there are no bathroom breaks. You're just left there so you can imagine how disgracing of a thing it would be to be in full view, having been physically and very visibly beaten in front of all the people.

Verse 3, *“³ The next day, when Pashhur released Jeremiah from the stocks,...”* I laugh because Jeremiah is going to give him a word, from the Lord, and he's going to tell him essentially with that word, I ain't backing down, buddy and that's what you're going to see here. And this is...I laugh because like this guy

has guts, you know what I mean? And so, he...it says, *“³...Jeremiah said to him, “The Lord does not call your name Pashhur, but Terror on Every Side. ⁴ For thus says the Lord: Behold, I will make you a terror to yourself and to all your friends. They shall fall by the sword of their enemies while you look on. And I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon. He shall carry them captive to Babylon, and shall strike them down with the sword.*

⁵ Moreover, I will give all the wealth of the city, all its gains, all its prized belongings, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah into the hand of their enemies, who shall plunder them and seize them and carry them to Babylon. ⁶ And you, Pashhur, and all who dwell in your house, shall go into captivity. To Babylon you shall go, and there you shall die, and there you shall be buried, you and all your friends, to whom you have prophesied falsely.”

Now, that's a pretty strong word, isn't it? You know, Jeremiah doesn't hold back. He's just been beaten and put in stocks overnight. We don't know what kind of weather was even going on at the time. Could have been freezing cold for all we know. He gets up, prophesies this word to this false individual, but then he goes home and he has a talk with God.

I want you to see. (Pastor Paul says 17 through 18 but it is actually 7-8) Verses 7 through 8 contain a prayer of Jeremiah to the Lord just after this time of persecution, and I want you to hear this. He says, *“⁷ O Lord, you have deceived me, and I was deceived; you are stronger than I, and you have prevailed...”* This is very interesting, see, Jeremiah is beginning this prayer, but it's kind of more like a complaint.

And he's complaining essentially that God has driven him to prophesy and to speak these words, though he never sought this position of ministry. He never asked for this kind of work. And yet he says, you prevailed upon me to take on this prophetic work and look what he says here at the end of verse 7, *“⁷ ...I have become a laughingstock all the day; everyone mocks me.”*

So we can kind of tell how people were responding as they walked by and saw Jeremiah in those stocks. They walked by and they laughed. They said, Ha! Look at the big fat prophet now who likes to prophesy all this destruction.

Verse 8, look what he goes on to say *“⁸ For whenever I speak, (In other words, whenever I open my mouth.) I cry out, I shout, “Violence and destruction!” For the word of the Lord has become for me a reproach and derision all day long. ⁹ If I say, “I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,” (I’m*

not going to do this anymore. He says,) *there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.*”

Isn't this something? These are very insightful words, aren't they? As it relates to just the ministry of the Holy Spirit. This is a really accurate description, frankly, in this complaint of Jeremiah of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And you know, just like anyone, when life gets hard, we're given a ministry to do.

God gives us a ministry, but when life gets hard and we begin to suffer in the midst of this work that God has given us to do, you know, we're tempted to say, well, I'm not going to do that anymore. I'm not going to do that anymore. I'm not going to do what God's given me to do and Jeremiah made that determination.

He said, I'm not going to do this anymore. And he said, I couldn't hold it back. I tried in the...I said, I'm not going to do it. I'm just, I'm not going to speak anymore because every time I open my mouth, I tell people they're going to die and they don't want to hear that. So he says, I'm just not going to say it anymore.

And he says, and it started to just burn inside of me. I laugh a little bit because I can kind of relate to this too. When I was a pretty young man, I guess I was probably in my late 20s. Yeah, I suppose, and I started pastoring a church up in Washington. It didn't go well at all. And I wasn't at all impressed with what we had attempted to do in terms of starting a church and this and that. And I felt like the only thing I ever dealt with was just the enemy who's constantly on my case.

I never really saw any real great fruit out of the ministry. I spent the first two and a half years pastoring a church, just fighting the enemy. I feel like that's all I did is just fought the enemy. And I remember telling the Lord, I'm done. Thank you. Thank you so much for the call, but I'm done. And I don't ever, ever want to pastor a church again.

And I told Him, I said, I'm never going to do it. I'd be happy, I'll teach a Bible study somewhere in somebody's living room, and I'll just love on people and we'll read the Bible and I'll tell them what It says and stuff like that. But that's as far as it's ever going to go.

I'm not going to pastor people. I'm not going to get involved in all of the pressure and drama that goes along with people coming and going and getting

mad at each other and the junk. And then I'm not going to do it anymore. I don't care. Well, here I am 30 years later, but you know, sometimes we feel that way.

We feel like giving up. You go talk to any pastor and ask him this question. I mean, somebody who's done it for a while. Ask him, over the years, how many times have you quit? How many times have you taken the keys to the church and thrown them out into a field only later to go back and search for them with a flashlight?

How many times? And they'll tell you, oh, more times than I care to count. There are times when we want to hold back, but the call of the Lord simply cannot be repressed, just like Jeremiah. Now there was just this...something in him that, that caused him to go forward but, you know, the Apostle Paul talked about being compelled as well, but he did it in a much more positive light.

Jeremiah is kind of complaining about it. He's like, I don't like this. But I want to show you how Paul described it in his letter to the Corinthians, his second letter, chapter 5, verse 14, he wrote,

2 Corinthians 5:14 (ESV)

For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore we have died;

I actually prefer the NIV's translation to this verse because it says, *“¹⁴ For the love of Christ compels us....”* I looked up that word actually in the Greek. That word that is...is translated here in the ESV controls or in the NIV compels and it means to seize upon and to lay hold of and to control. That's why the word controls there in the ESV, but to seize upon.

In other words, the love of Christ has seized upon us. And I can't help myself. I have to do this. I have to tell people what Your Word says because Your love has so enveloped my heart. And I have so experienced the deliverance of the Lord that I can do nothing else, but tell others. And though the enemy comes after me with his big rotten stick and all of his lies and deceptions, I have to continue on.

So, Jeremiah continues on here in verse 10, and he says, *“¹⁰ For I hear many whispering. Terror is on every side! “Denounce him! Let us denounce him!” say all my close friends, (they are just) watching for my fall. (He says,). “Perhaps he will be deceived; then we can overcome him and take our revenge on him.”* Look what Jeremiah says though, in the midst of these complaints, in verse 11.

“¹¹ But the Lord is with me as a dread warrior;... ” The New King James says, *“¹¹...as a mighty awesome one;... ”* The NIV renders it *“¹¹...a mighty warrior;... ”* The Lord is with me and what is Jeremiah saying? I don't like this, but I also have to admit something. He's made me a mighty warrior. He's made me a warrior. Isn't that incredible?

He says, *“¹¹...therefore my persecutors will stumble; they will not overcome me. They will be greatly shamed, for they will not succeed. Their eternal dishonor will never be forgotten. ¹² O Lord of hosts, who tests the righteous, who sees the heart and the mind, let me see your vengeance upon them,... ”*

This is Jeremiah saying, I want to actually be around to see you bring the house down right around their ears. Okay, just let me see it happen, please. *“¹²...for to you have I committed my cause. (And then for just one single verse, Jeremiah praises the Lord. He says,) ¹³ Sing to the Lord; praise the Lord! For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hand of evildoers. ”*

Now, that's one thing when we're, yeah, when we're dealing with difficulty we go through...maybe you've noticed we go through ups and we go through downs. When we draw near to the Lord, we're encouraged and we say, but God is by my side, and then we get away from the Lord and we begin to look at the problems again and we go, I don't want to do this anymore and I'm going to... and I'm dead, I'm dead.

Well, Jeremiah had his eyes on the Lord here, and now he gets them off. And that's what we come up to in verse 14. And you're going to find that he...this section sounds very much like something taken from the Book of Job. Because you can hear the depression and the discouragement that has taken hold of Jeremiah's heart now because of these things.

Look at what he says, *“¹⁴ Cursed be the day on which I was born! The day when my mother bore me, let it not be blessed! ¹⁵ Cursed be the man who brought the news to my father, “A son is born to you,” making him very glad. ¹⁶ Let that man be like the cities that the Lord overthrew without pity; let him hear a cry in the morning and an alarm at noon,¹⁷ because he did not kill me in the womb; so my mother would have been my grave, and her womb forever great. ¹⁸ Why did I come out from the womb to see toil and sorrow, and spend my days in shame?”*

Boy, you know, you read this and you just go, wow! This is heavy. But you know, the Saints of God go through some heavy stuff sometimes, don't they? Here's a man who has just been obedient to the Lord. He's given the message

that God gave him and he's got nothing but ridicule and now physical persecution. And by the way, he's not done getting physical persecution. There will be more, although God will bring him through it.

God will deliver him, but God will also allow him to experience it. But Jeremiah's emotions, and you can tell he's a very passionate man. You can tell he's an emotional man. He's...he's on the mountaintop one minute praising the Lord and saying, but I am a mighty warrior from the Lord and then the next minute he is cursing the day of his birth.

He's cursing the man who gave his dad the news. What did that guy ever do against him? Curse be the man who gave my, who told my dad, hey, you had a son. You can tell. If you ever notice when you're depressed, just everything's bad. It doesn't matter. Everything's bad, whether it's not even involved, it's just bad because I'm seeing with depressed eyes, you know.

Well, chapter 21, I have to tell you, and this is going to be the last chapter we're going to do tonight. This jumps ahead chronologically. You know, the Bible isn't always written in perfect chronological order. And the last chapter that we just read that happened during the reign of Jehoiakim, who was one of the sons of Josiah, who was on the throne for a period of about 11 years. As we get into chapter 21 now, we're actually going to jump 20 years into the future, during the reign of Zedekiah, who was the last King of Judah, when the Babylonian army broke into Jerusalem.

Jerusalem, took the city, took people captive, killed them, great many people, and took the rest into exile. This is incredible now. And what you're going to... Oh, by the way, what you're going to tell in this, from this, is that the Babylonians are here. You know, he's been talking about it, these people coming from the north, he's been talking about it, and talking about it, and talking about it. Well, they're here. They're here now.

And what they do...what they did back in those days is they would lay siege to a city. And what that meant is they would basically camp around the city walls, and they would keep people from leaving, and they would keep people from entering. And that meant nobody could bring in food, nobody could leave the place, and they would just starve them out.

Now thankfully, they had a pretty good water supply because Hezekiah, during his kingship, was smart enough to divert some streams, some well springs into the city, so they had some water, but they eventually did starve, and they eventually did resort to cannibalism, and it was horrible. But this is at the very

beginning of the siege, okay? And by the way, a siege could last for years. Two, three, four years. They would wait for a city to literally die of starvation or give up or they'd get to a point where they'd be so weak that the enemies could go in and just take the city easily.

“¹ This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, when King Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur the son of Malchiah and Zephaniah the priest, the son of (that guy. That's a tough one.) Maaseiah, (that's actually not even right.) saying, ² “Inquire of the Lord for us, for Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon is making war against us. Perhaps the Lord will deal with us according to all his wonderful deeds and will make him withdraw from us.”

Now, guys, Jeremiah has been prophesying for well over 20 years that this is going to happen. And he's been telling them exactly what was going to go down. And now the enemy's there and then he's even been telling me it was going to be the Babylonians and now they're there and the king says let's go get Jeremiah and see if we can get a word from the Lord. He's been fine getting a word from his false prophets all this time, because they've been telling him what he wanted to hear.

But now when life begins to get challenging, they turn to the Lord and say, let's get a word from the Lord and maybe He'll give us a good word. And the Lord will move on our behalf and come against our enemy, and He'll withdraw from us.

Isn't that just human nature? How we turn to the things of the world while life seems okay. But when life begins to get sour, we turn to the Lord and we're looking for good news. You know, God, I've been sowing my wild oats and just kind of doing my own thing and sinning real good for years and years. Now give me some good news. I'm not necessarily wanting to change. Oh, don't get me wrong, God. I don't want to repent, but life is getting a little bit challenging. So, could I get some good news here, please? That's what's happening. Okay.

“³ Then Jeremiah said to them: “Thus you shall say to Zedekiah, ⁴ ‘Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands (not theirs) and with which you are fighting against the king of Babylon and against the Chaldeans who are besieging you outside the walls. And I will bring them together into the midst of this city. ⁵ I myself will fight against you with outstretched hand and strong arm, in anger and in fury and in great wrath.

⁶ And I will strike down the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast. They shall die of a great pestilence. ⁷ Afterward, declares the Lord, I will give Zedekiah king of Judah and his servants and the people in this city who survive the pestilence, sword, and famine into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and into the hand of their enemies, into the hand of those who seek their lives. He shall strike them down with the edge of the sword. He shall not pity them or spare them or have compassion.'

⁸ "And to this people you shall say: 'Thus says the Lord: Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death. ⁹ He who stays in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence, but he who goes out and surrenders to the Chaldeans who are besieging you shall live and shall have his life as a prize of war. ¹⁰ For I have set my face against this city for harm and not for good, declares the Lord: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.'"

Now, you got to understand something about what Jeremiah just said. That was considered treason. Basically, what the Lord is saying, through Jeremiah, is this place is going down in flames and if you determine to stay here, thinking that you're safe and because the temple's here or God will never come against this city or destroy it or the temple, I want you to know you're not only wrong, you're going to pay with your life.

So, since I have determined this is what's going to happen, I will see how much you're willing to listen to Me and obey Me by doing what really goes against your natural instincts and just go out and surrender; because you're not just surrendering to the enemy, you're surrendering to Me because I'm with the enemy. I am fighting against you and you can't fight against Me.

You might be able to put up a fight against the King of Babylon, if the circumstances were different, but you can't fight against Me and I'm in this. And so, I want to see if you're willing to understand that I'm in this and you'll go along with what I say, even if it doesn't make military sense, you with Me?

This is a challenging thing for people to hear. And you got to know that they would if somebody felt the need to respond to the Lord in this case, even to... it's like, how are you going to get out of the city? How are we going to even get out? How are we going to sneak out without dying at the hands of our own people who consider us treasonous jerks for going to the enemy's side, you see?

So, these people are facing challenging circumstances on either side of the equation. If I stay, I die. If I say I'm going to follow the Lord, I'm risking my

life. Now, the Lord did tell me I'd save my life, so am I going to trust Him? Or am I going to let fear win the day?

So, isn't that something? So, He says, I've set before you life, the way of life, and the way of death. And then, further, Jeremiah gives a word now to the rest of the descendants of King David's family. All these kings, by the way, that have been on the throne in Judah, they're all descendants of David. They're not anything like David, but they are blood descendants.

So, now He gives a message to the broader line of descendants of David's family. And He says, *¹¹ And to the house of the king of Judah say, 'Hear the word of the Lord, ¹² O house of David! Thus says the Lord: "Execute justice in the morning, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed, lest my wrath go forth like fire, and burn with none to quench it, because of your evil deeds.'"*

¹³ "Behold, I am against you, O inhabitant of the valley, O rock of the plain, declares the Lord; you who say, 'Who shall come down against us, or who shall enter our habitations?' ¹⁴ I will punish you according to the fruit of your deeds, declares the Lord; I will kindle a fire in her forest, and it shall devour all that is around her."

Those are the words that the people of Israel or Judah had been hearing. Who's going to come against the work of the Lord? Who is going to come against the habitation of the Lord? That's what the people were hearing and the Lord says, I will punish those who speak thus. So, in other words, God is saying judgment is here, and there's no escaping it at this time. That's where we're going to stop, and we will pick it up in chapter 21 next time. Let's pray.

Father, thank you so much for this study through Jeremiah, it's a challenging one. It's a difficult one to read and kind of embrace because of the difficulties that are being communicated here in the judgment that is being conveyed. But Lord, these are important words. This is part of the scripture, and this is what you want us to understand about Your righteous indignation against sin. And at the same time, Lord, your incredible patience to abide with Your people and to call them out of that life of sin.

I pray, my Father God, that we would be a people who respond to Your voice, who respond quickly to Your voice, who tremble at Your Word, who repent of sins that we are convicted of and who turn away from those things of the world that we know we're not to be walking in.

Father, make us a people who are soft hearted rather than stiff necked. Make us a people who desire to walk in obedience to the Word of God. Make us a people who respond to Your great love with an expression of love of our own that desires to live our lives for the glory of God. Teach us your ways, O' Lord God, that we may walk in Your truth. We ask these things in the precious name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen. Amen.

God bless you.