

Jeremiah 5:1-31 - April 28, 2021
When We Refuse God's Correction
J.D. Farag

Good evening. Yes, praise the Lord. You can be seated. Welcome. How are you all doing tonight? Okay, good. Good answer. All right. All right, so glad you're here tonight. Want to welcome those of you that are joining us online. Jeremiah, Chapter 5 tonight, we're making our way through the Bible on Thursday nights, book-by-book, chapter-by-chapter, verse-by-verse. We're still doing one chapter so far. No hurry. Don't want to rush through what God has for us. And such is the case with the chapter that is before us again tonight. So why don't we pray? We'll ask God to bless our time together In His Word. If you would, please join with me.

Lord, thank You so much. Lord, It's just so encouraging and refreshing and even calming to come here on a Thursday night. Many of us so look forward to this time that we have together to just worship You and fellowship with each other. And now as we open up our Bibles and get into Your Word, Lord, we hear You speak, we just long to hear You speak into our lives in that still small voice of the Holy Spirit, as You always do. Lord, that's why we are here tonight, because we are hungry and thirsty for You. We need to hear You speak, and not only here, but take heed. So Lord, would You bless our time together in Your Word tonight? I know there's so much here that You want to show us and minister to us. We don't want to miss anything that You have for us, so You're going to have to keep our attention so our minds don't wander. Lord, we want to leave here different than the way that we came here tonight, as Kapono just prayed. Many of us stressed, tired; just the busyness of our lives. So Lord, this is a solace for us. This is a sanctuary for us. This is that time that we set aside, put all of that aside, and just give You our undivided attention. So Lord, we want to do that tonight. And thank You in advance for what You're going to do in our time together. We pray in Jesus' name, amen and amen. Oh, thank You, Lord.

All right. So here in Chapter 5, God through the prophet Jeremiah is going to describe in graphic detail, I might add, what always ensues when we refuse God's correction. And once again, I have to say this again this week ,and I know we mentioned this last week and talked about this, but it's really important because the chapter before us comes packaged with this propensity to disenfranchise ourselves from the warnings that are in the text.

And by that, I mean we can read this, we can study this chapter, a chapter like this in God's Word, and we're so quick to kind of disconnect ourselves from it under the banner of, well, this was for them then, not so much for us now.

This is the judgment of God, the correction of God. They would not take heed to the Word of God. And we are sadly dismissive of what it is that we're going to read tonight here in God's Word and we don't apply it to our lives because we really don't think that, quite frankly it applies to our lives and so there's this unfortunate disconnect when we do that.

As we're about to see, the disconnect is concerning those times when God has to use the fear of the Lord instead of our love for the Lord to correct us. I might need to maybe expound on that just a bit before we jump in. There are those times when God, just because of our love for Him, we're walking in obedience to Him.

I'm reminded of what Jesus said, when He said, If you love Me you'll obey Me. And it's not one of these things of, 'If you really love Me, you would obey Me.' Well, it's more like this: It's because you love Me you'll be obedient to Me. In other words, your obedience to Me is measured by your love for Me. And this is what it looks like in the life of a believer. We just love the Lord so much that we don't want to do anything to grieve Him. We don't want to do anything against Him because of how much we love Him. And certainly that's a motivation for obedience.

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But there are those times when, instead of our love for the Lord, being the motivation for obedience, it has to come by way of the fear of the Lord. And that's what we're going to see actually, beginning here in verse 1. **“Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem; see now and know, and seek in her open places if you can find a man, if there is anyone who executes judgment, who seeks the truth, and I will pardon her. Though they say, [verse 2] 'As the Lord lives,' surely they swear falsely.”**

Let's start with verse 2, and then we'll work our way back to verse 1. This saying, as they would say, 'as the Lord lives,' would be akin to a similar saying in our day that goes something like this, and you'll forgive me, but it's 'I swear to God,' 'I swear on the Bible.' Or have you ever heard this one or maybe even yourself said this one? 'I swear on a stack of Bibles.' Listen, if you have to swear on a stack of Bibles, your word must mean nothing. You shouldn't have to do that. Your yes should be yes; your no should be no, right? But see, this is what they were doing. and as such, they were doing this falsely, 'as the Lord lives', 'I swear, as God is my witness'. Well, the reason you're doing that is because you're doing so falsely.

Now, what about verse 1 that leads up to this saying that they had, 'as the Lord lives'? Well, Jeremiah is told by God to search throughout Jerusalem and see if he can find just one man, just one who's righteous, who seeks the truth, who executes judgment. And here's what God said, If he can find just one, I will pardon all of Jerusalem. Does this sound a little bit reminiscent of when Abraham was pleading with God concerning Sodom and his nephew, Lot, who was there in Sodom? And he starts off pleading with the Lord, Lord, would you destroy this city if there were 40 righteous? Lord says, No, I will not destroy this city if there are 40 righteous. And then Abraham continues his plea, and he goes down from 40 and he stops, interesting, at ten. And the question has to be asked, why would he stop at ten? Could it be that Abraham thought for sure there had to be at least ten righteous there in Sodom, and there was not. And so here we are, there's not even one. You can search high and low, look in the open places, see if you can find one.

Verse 3. **“Oh, Lord, are not Your eyes on the truth? You have stricken them, but they have not grieved. You have consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than rock. They have refused to return.”** This is Jeremiah's response now to the Lord. Oh, he's still going to keep seeking and searching for even one, as we'll see next, but here he's crying out to the Lord on behalf of the people, and quite frankly, he's astonished. He's like, here You've corrected them, You've stricken them, but there's no grief or sorrow on their part. You've consumed them, but they still refuse to receive correction. In fact, not only have they not received Your correction, they've actually become harder and they've refused to return. This is a - I call it a cry. It's not a prayer even, as much as it is a cry. You know how sometimes you don't pray to the Lord, you just cry. It's just a cry, a plea and this is what Jeremiah is doing here.

Verse 4. **“Therefore, I said, 'Surely these are poor. They are foolish; for they do not know the way of the Lord, the judgment of their God. I will go to the great men and speak to them, for they have known the way of the Lord, the judgment of their God.' But these have altogether broken the yoke and burst the bonds.”** In other words, I'm going to keep searching, Okay, I'm not going to search among the poor and the foolish; they don't know. Maybe I'll seek out the learned, the great, maybe I'll speak to them. I mean, they know the Lord. They know the ways of the Lord. They know the judgment of their God. But even them, they too, altogether, I find not one. They've all broken the yoke.

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You know, as I was preparing for the teaching tonight and kind of pondering these two verses in particular, it kind of hit me that this is the heart of Jeremiah. We get a, kind of a glimpse into the heart of this man. I mean, he's desperately trying to wrap his mind around this conundrum that he's in, and he's really taken it to heart and it's breaking his heart.

He cannot find in his search throughout, whether rich or poor, great or small, not even one. And it's almost like he's trying to in vain, unsuccessfully so, make excuses for them. Oh, maybe it's because they just, they just don't know any better, they don't know the way of the Lord. It doesn't excuse it necessarily, but it might in some way explain it. He's trying to come up with a defense.

And I don't know if you've caught this or not, but right out of the chute, God is sort of arguing His case against his people, concerning His judgment on His people. It's a just judgment. And there's almost this due process in the first 4 or 5 verses where God is saying, Okay, go ahead, see if there are any righteous and then come back to me before I execute judgment. And Jeremiah does it and he comes back to the Lord, he's like, Lord, I don't understand. I don't understand. This is heartbreaking. I'm trying to reconcile it, and I cannot. They don't know. They've altogether broken the yoke.

Now, verse 6. **“Therefore a lion from the forest shall slay them, a wolf of the deserts shall destroy them; a leopard will watch over their cities. Everyone who goes out from there shall be torn in pieces, [Why?] because their transgressions are many; their backslidings have increased. 'How shall I pardon you for this? [Verse 7] Your children have forsaken Me and sworn by those that are not gods.”** I want you to pay particular attention to what he says next here at the end of verse 7. **“When I had fed them to the full, then they committed adultery and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses.”**

Get this picture in your mind. This is graphic. They were actually standing in line to get into these houses of prostitution. And this on the heels of God blessing them to the full, prospering them, feeding them to the full. We're going to see even more graphically here in a moment, and again, you'll forgive me for saying it this way, but they had become fat and sassy.

And that is the problem, isn't it? I think if we're honest with ourselves, we would have to admit that we all have this tendency to turn away from the Lord during times of abundance. I know I say it like this, for lack of a better way of saying it, but it's not that God has problems, but the problem God has is that He wants to bless us, but He also knows that in blessing us, there's this great potential for us in that blessing and abundance and prosperity to turn away from the Lord.

This is something over the years that I've been walking with the Lord that I have seen; I've experienced it in my own life. Certainly as I've taught through the Bible, I've seen it replete throughout Scripture that prosperity is actually more dangerous than adversity. Because in adversity you have to trust the Lord, you have to look to the Lord, you have to call upon the Lord, you have to rely upon the Lord. But during times of prosperity, you begin to trust in your own abundance, your own resources, and it can take your heart away from the Lord.

And this is what the Lord's saying here. I cannot turn a blind eye to this; I cannot pardon you for this. You've forsaken Me and you've gone after these other gods and you've committed these horrific, unspeakable acts of sexual immorality in your abundance and prosperity. I mean, here I blessed you to the full. You've had need of nothing. You've want for nothing. I have blessed you abundantly and that blessing has turned into a curse, because the very blessing from the hand of God now has become that which has, if you will, given me license, which is where we get the word, licentiousness.

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It's almost like, you know, God has blessed me and I have this abundance and our hearts are prone to wander.

They [Verse 8] Again, this is quite picturesque. **"They were like well-fed lusty stallions; everyone neighed after his neighbor's wife. Shall I not punish them for these things? says the Lord. And shall I not avenge myself on such a nation as this?"** I hope that - and we've talked about this - and maybe this is as good of a time as any as a reminder of this. But there are so many prophetic parallels to our day today and our nation today, as there was in Jeremiah's day. I mean, this again is quite picturesque, quite the imagery, well-fed, lusty stallions . And the Lord is again arguing His case against his people, Justifying His just judgment of His people.

And this is chilling if you think about it, because of its application to us today. Shall not God judge this nation? Shall God not punish this nation for these same things? This is the message: judgment is coming. I tried, I tried to warn you. I pleaded with you I tried to correct you, redirect you, and you would have none of it. You would not return to Me. Your backslidings increased. Your heart didn't soften towards Me in repentance. Rather, it became even harder towards me.

You know the same heat - we're going to see this here in a moment - Fire can either harden or melt. The same fire can either harden or soften. It can warm or burn; same fire. **"Go up on her walls and destroy, [Verse 10] but do not make a complete end."** Oh, thank You, Lord, for this. That's the mercy of God. We saw this last week. We're going to see it again later on. This is God saying, Yes, destruction is coming. Yes, judgment is coming, but it will not be complete destruction because I'm going to restore you. I still have a plan for you. I'm not through with you. I am chastising you. I am correcting you, but I'm not going to completely destroy you.

"Take away her branches, for they are not the Lord's. For the House of Israel [Verse 11] and the House of Judah have dealt very treacherously with Me, says the Lord." This is again, we saw this, I think it was in Chapter 4. At first read you can easily miss it; I did. Then the Lord checked me on it. Because the Lord takes notice of our dealing with Him and treatment of Him. Have you ever thought of it like that? How we treat the Lord? Wait, what? Yeah, how we deal with the Lord. Notice He says, the way you've dealt with Me is treacherous. That's how you treat Me. You've treated me and dealt with Me treacherously. I don't know, maybe I need to just speak for myself, but this is very convicting because oftentimes the furthest thing from my mind is what I do or say, how it affects the Lord, how it grieves the Lord. Oh, would to God that it would never be said of me that I deal treacherously with the Lord. I want to bless the Lord, I want to be a blessing to the Lord. You know, we always pray, Lord, bless me. But have you ever thought of it this way: What about you blessing the Lord? I bless You, Lord. I want to be pleasing to You, Lord, in my dealings with You, Lord. I want to bless You, Lord. Is my life a blessing to You? Is my life pleasing to You in the way that I deal with You?

Verse 12. This is interesting. You're going to have to bear with me on this one. **"They have lied about the Lord, and said, 'It is not He. Neither will evil come upon us, nor shall we see sword or famine. And the prophets become wind, for the word is not in them. Thus shall it be done to them.'"** Wow. Wow! You know what Jeremiah is saying here? He's saying the prophets are liars. They're lying. What are they lying about? Oh, they're lying about the warnings of God's judgment. They're saying, No, evil is not coming. Judgement's not coming. It is not - it is not going to happen. You're not going to see the sword or famine. Come on!

And this - verse 13, I - Two commentators referred to the same thing, so that's my story and I'm sticking with it. How's that for an intro? **"And the prophets become wind"** - windbags. No, no,

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they're full of hot air. They're lying. They're telling the people, listen, it's not going to happen. God's not going to do that. It's all good. And you got to wonder if they actually believe that. Were they so deceived that they believed that God wasn't going to judge them?

How did they get there? Because God is slow to anger. He's long suffering, patient, and not willing that any should perish. He does not take any delight in judging the wicked. He always errs on the side of grace and gives people time to repent.

And here's the problem and we're just as guilty of it, let's not disconnect ourselves from this. The problem is we misinterpret the patience of God, the grace of God, the long suffering of God, as the permission from God. Well, it must not be a big deal. I'm still blessed, I'm still prospered, things are still good. And so under the banner of God's long suffering and patience and mercy and grace, they miss interpret it as, it must be okay. It's like God is going to just turn a blind eye and maybe just give us a pass on this one. Maybe that's how they got there.

What we do know is that they prophesied falsely, we're going to see at the end of the chapter, and they lied about the Lord. It was all a lie. No, His judgment is coming upon them and the sword is coming and famine is coming.

And isn't it interesting - and again, when I say bear with me, there's a reason for that because as a pastor, this is an issue because again, easily missed at first read, For the word is not in them . So you got pastors of whom it could be said, verse 13, **"For the word is not in them."** They're false teachers. They're speaking falsely and they're lying. Do they believe that? Do they truly, genuinely, deep down inside - I mean, I'm asking the question. I don't know the answer. I've inquired of the Lord many times concerning this matter, this issue, and again, it is an issue. Did they actually believe that? Are they so blind, so deceived as to believe what they're saying? Because it's not what your Word is saying And the only conclusion I can come to, regrettably, is that the Word is not in them. They're not preaching the Word.

And is it no wonder because there is a huge difference - again, bear with me - There's a huge difference between referring to the Bible and teaching the Bible. And the world today is most unforgiving of a pastor who will stand behind a pulpit and not preach the Word because the people that are in that church not hearing the Word because the Word is not in them, when life hits and life has hit, what are they going to do?

That's the last verse, I'm kind of getting ahead of myself. That's the question: What are you going to do? You're ill equipped. You're ill prepared, because you didn't have the Word. You didn't know the Word. I think of that parable that Jesus taught of the two builders. The one whose life comes crashing down is the one who heard the Word, or a reference to the Word but they did not put it into practice. That's the difference. That's the difference.

I think about when our daughter died, had my wife and I not been solid in the Word, grounded in the Word, we would not have made it. And the statistics bear it out, by the way, some 90 plus percent of couples who experience the death of a child end up in a divorce. The pain is so deep and intense when a couple experiences the death of a child. And were it not for us being grounded in the Word, knowing the Word, the Word of God and the God of the Word, we would have never made it through that.

And again, this speaks to the heart of Jeremiah, the weeping prophet. This is why he's weeping. This is heartbreaking. It's heartbreaking for me to see a Christian, a brother or sister in Christ that is ill

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equipped, ill prepared when they go through the storms of life because they weren't taught, they were not given the whole counsel of God.

As the apostle Paul would say, Luke records it in Acts, Hey, my hands are clean. I have the blood of no one on my hands because I did not cease from giving you and teaching you the whole Word of God. The Whole word, nothing but the Word, so help me God. In other words, I didn't just pick and choose those parts in the Bible. No, I, I taught the whole Bible. Even the rough one, the rough parts, the tough stuff. I didn't want to but I needed to and you needed me to.

Well, this is a very sobering couple of verses here in this chapter. And maybe again, I'm speaking of myself, maybe to myself, preaching to the choir, as it were, but I cannot stress this enough. We live in a day that is most unforgiving and there's no shortage, by the way, of teachers that are like this. And again, maybe it's - maybe I'm taking it too personally, but I don't have permission to get up here every week as is my privilege to and not speak the truth, that the sword is coming, the famine is coming, judgment is coming. The judgment of God is coming. It is coming. Why? Because it's in the Word and the word is in me. The Word is in me.

And now we're going to read verse 14. **“Therefore thus says the Lord God of hosts: 'Because you speak this word, behold, I will make My words in your mouth fire, and the people wood, and it shall devour them.’** Wow! Thanks a lot, God. Wait, let me see if I got this straight. So you put - we got this in Chapter 1, right out of the chute, right? You put Your words in my mouth; I have to speak them. And now You're telling me that the words You put in my mouth are going to be like fire, and the people I'm going to speak them to are going to be like the wood. Wow! I'm not going to have a church left after I speak this. It's going to devour them.

I know I probably shared this. Maybe it's appropriate to share it again, it's on my heart, from my heart to your heart. But I guess in some way I do understand, again, not to excuse it, but to in some way, like Jeremiah maybe explain it, why it is that pastors won't preach the Word. Maybe it's because they know that it's going to be fire and it's going to burn and it's going to consume and it's going to devour. People don't want to hear it but people need to hear it. Their life depends on it.

“Behold, [Verse 15] I will bring a nation against you from afar, O House of Israel, says the Lord. 'It is a mighty nation, It is an ancient nation, a nation whose language you do not know, nor can you understand what they say.’ Of course, speaking of Babylon, that some believe some 40 years from the time this prophecy was given. The Babylonians would come exactly as God said they would and destroy Jerusalem and take captive God's people. **“Their quiver [Verse 16] is like an open tomb; They are all mighty men. And they shall eat up your harvest and your bread, which your sons and daughters should eat. They shall eat up your flocks and your herds. They shall eat up your vines and your fig trees. They shall destroy your fortified cities, [And I want you to catch this] in which you trust, with the sword.”**

Remember that abundance, that prosperity? I blessed you to the full, I prospered you to the full. Well, we've got some details here. I blessed the harvest of your crops so you have bread to eat. I blessed your livestock, your flocks and your herds. I blessed your vineyards and your trees, your vines and your fig trees. I even blessed you with the ability to fortify your structures, your cities. But you know what? As it turns out, you put your trust in that which I gave to you. The fortified cities, the abundance of your vines, fig trees, your flocks, your herds, your harvests, your crops. I'm the one who blessed you with that. And what do you do with that? You start trusting in that which I gave you, instead of Me.

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And now we're going to see. **"Nevertheless in those days,' says the Lord, [Verse 18. And here it is again, the mercy of God.] I will not make a complete end of you. And [Verse 19] it will be when you say, 'Why does the Lord our God do all these things to us?' Then you shall answer them, 'Just as you have forsaken Me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve aliens in a land that is not yours.'"** What an irony. You have served and worship these foreign gods in your land, now you're going to be taken captive into a foreign land. You'll have plenty of those gods there. That's what God's saying. And this is what happens when we refuse God's correction, we don't take heed to His warning. He will deem it necessary to give us over to that thing that we've served and trusted in. Oh, you like these foreign gods do you? You've brought them into your land to serve them and trust in them. Here's what I'm going to do: I'm going to give you your fill of them. You like those foreign gods? I'm going to let the Babylonians take you into captivity and oh, you ain't seen foreign gods yet. You ain't seen nothing yet. Wait till you see the array of foreign gods that are there for you in their land to serve and to trust in.

I was just thinking about in Paul's epistles to the Corinthians. I think we referenced it on Sunday concerning love and what love is and what love is not. Paul rebukes them concerning this guy that was in open sexual sin within the church and they were tolerating it, allowing it under the banner of, we're so loving and accepting. And Paul says, That's not love. If you really love him, what you're going to do is you're going to kick him out of the church and give him over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh. That's the only way he's going to come to his senses and repent; and he does.

Well, in a sense, this is what God is saying here. I, can't let this go. I cannot tolerate this. I love you too much. I'm going to have to give you over to this and you're going to have your fill of this and you're going to come to your senses and you're going to repent. But this is what it's going to take. I mean, it's the easy way or the hard way. And apparently we can't do this the easy way, so I got to do this, reluctantly, by the way, the hard way.

Never imagine that God again, takes any delight in doing this. I would venture to say that God will do everything and stop at nothing to avoid having to do this. You think he wants for His children to be taken captive by the Babylonians? But if that's what it takes, I don't have any other choice. You've left Me with no choice. I have to do this.

Verse 20. Declare this in the house of Jacob and proclaim it in Judah, saying, 'Here this now, O foolish people, without understanding, who have eyes and see not, and who have ears and hear not: Do you not fear Me?' says the Lord. 'Will you not tremble at My presence, who have placed the sand as the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass beyond it? And though its waves toss to and fro, yet they cannot prevail; though they roar, yet they cannot pass over it.'"

Couple of thoughts here. First, it's this plea again, this query, if you prefer. God's saying, don't you fear Me? I mean, you're not going to obey Me because of your love for Me, but don't you at the very least, have a fear of Me?

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil. Don't you fear Me? The sea does. Oh, and by the way, you're fighting against Me. You will not prevail against Me. The sea with its waves crashing and tossing to and fro, they roar, but they will never prevail against Me. Is that what you're trying to do? You're fighting against Me, thinking you can prevail against Me? Do you not fear Me?

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If you can't tell, this is a really hard chapter. You're going, You, what about us? I know. I'm sorry. What can I say? That's true. If it's hard to teach, it's got to be hard to be taught. There's no fear of God in our eyes. That's the only explanation, isn't it? I mean, if I really fear the Lord and trembled before Him, I'd be on my face before Him. That's what the fear of the Lord is. You know, I think we misunderstand when we talk about the fear of God. You know, it's kind of like, whoa, we've got to be afraid of Him! Not at all! You know what the fear of the Lord is? Yes, it's a reverent, holy awe of who God is, how mighty God is. But it's also this fear of never wanting to do anything that would displease Him. That's the fear of the Lord. You're so afraid of doing anything that would hurt the heart of God.

Let me bring it into a more bottom shelf illustration. Think about it in the husband-wife relationship. I love my wife so much. I mean, I love her so much. I think she kind of likes me, too, but I love her so much, okay? And I fear ever doing anything that would hurt her. That's how much I love her. You know, we talked about this on Sunday, to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, strength. If you love the Lord that much, the first five commandments, done deal. You're not going to have any other gods before Him. You're not going to make for yourself any graven images and bow down to them. You're certainly not going to take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. You're going to enter into His rest and you're going to honor - I know it's your earthly father and mother, but that is proportionate to our honoring of our Heavenly Father. There is a link. And the second is like it: To love your neighbor as yourself. If I love my neighbor that much, I'm not going to steal from them. I'm not going to covet them because I love them. I will fear [fear] doing anything. I will tremble in fear. That's how serious I take it because I don't want to do anything that's going to bring any pain to someone that I love that much. That's the fear of the Lord. And God is just asking, it's rhetorical, I suppose. Do you not fear me? Because if you really feared Me, we wouldn't be having this conversation. If you really feared Me, I wouldn't have to correct you. If you really feared Me, I wouldn't have to allow the Babylonians to come and invade and take you captive.

Verse 23. **But this people has a defiant and rebellious heart; they have revolted and departed. They do not say in their heart, 'Let us now fear the Lord, our God, who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season. He reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest.' Your Iniquities [Verse 25] have turned these things away, and your sins have withheld good from you.**" Here it is again. I prospered you, I blessed you, I brought the rains for you, and what's your response? Defiance and rebellion. Here again, we see how the goodness of God and the abundance from God can be that which takes away our heart for God. This is what happened to them.

I think about David - I just - this just came to me - just real quick. When Nathan the prophet confronts him, lays out this case, and David becomes indignant, and then Nathan, a type of the Holy Spirit, says, David, thou art the man and David just crumbles and breaks. Finally, David, finally. How long? In the Psalms you give us a snapshot of what it was like for you. Sounds like it was well nigh one year and you were dying inside and now you finally repented. And it's so interesting, the detail, what God says to David through the prophet Nathan, He says, David, I gave you everything. I withheld from you nothing. I have blessed you exceedingly, abundantly, above and beyond anything you could have ever imagined. Is there anything I would not have done for you or given to you? Oh, that must have and rightfully so, justly, rightly, it must have just, oh, pierced his heart! This man who had a heart after God's own heart. Oh, You've been so good to me! You've given so much to me.

Verse 26. How are you doing? We're almost done. You okay? **For among My people are found wicked men; they lie in wait as one who sets snares; they set a trap; they catch men. As a cage is full of birds, so their houses are full of deceit. [That's quite the image] Therefore [And here it is**

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again] they have become great and grown rich. They have grown fat, they are sleek. Yes, they surpass the deeds of the wicked. They do not plead the cause, the cause of the fatherless. Yet they prosper, and the right of the needy they do not defend." Interesting side note, parenthetically, did you know that that was the sin of Sodom? We always associate the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah as being just sexual perversion. But if you read the text in Ezekiel, the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was that they had no regard for the poor, the helpless, the fatherless. We just saw that in James, did we not? You fancy yourself as being religious. The only pure undefiled religion I'll accept is taking care of those who can't care for themselves and who cannot repay you like orphans and widows.

Verse 29. **"Shall I not punish them for these things? says the Lord. Shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?"** Again, that should send chills up and down every single one of our spines. Now listen to verse 30 and 31. **"An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power; and My people love to have it so. [And here's the question.] But what will you do in the end?"** What an indictment. Let's start with the prophets. They were prophesying false - They were false prophets. What about the priests? Oh, they were corrupted in their power. And if that weren't bad enough, how about the people? You've got the prophets, the priests and the people. Let's call them the Three P's. Why not. False prophets, corrupted priests, and people! Oh, they love to have it so. Maybe that's why.

I keep referring to it in Isaiah, Speak to us only smooth things. Tell us what our ears are itching to hear. Tell us what we want to hear. We love it when you do that. Tell us lies. Don't tell us the truth. I don't want to hear the truth. Go ahead and prophesy falsely. This is quite deliberate, for lack of a better word.

But it seems that the people were encouraging the prophets to prophesy falsely and the priests to rule by their own corrupted power They loved it, they loved to have it so.

But, and this is how the chapter ends, what will you do in the end? That's the question. What are you going to do when the time – when not if the time comes? What are you going to do when the end comes? Because heretofore you've had false prophets corrupted by power priests, and you've loved every minute of it. What are you going to do when the time comes? What are you going to do in the end?

I'm so sorry that I have to end the Bible study on that note, but if I didn't, then I'm going to do the very thing that the judgment came on them for. You know, take the edge off of it. Come on, Pastor, can't you just kind of leave us with a warm, fuzzy, you know, something just kind of, you know? No, I can't because I don't have permission to.

Maybe as we leave here tonight, make our way home and end the night, maybe we would do well to ask ourselves this question: What am I going to do in the end? What am I going to do in the end? Why don't you stand. Kaponu, come on up. Astonishing and horrible things? Astonishing and horrible things.

Lord, it's times like this that we just throw our selves down on our face before You and plead for Your mercy. Oh, Lord, be merciful to us. Would to God that we would not be numbered among those of whom it can be said, they did horrible things, abominable things. Lord I pray that we would take heed to this warning because it is so apropos for us in our day today. What are we going to do in the end? Because judgment is coming. Lord, I pray that our hearts are not hardened but softened Lord, I pray that when your heavy hand is upon us that it would break us. That we would be like that worm, as

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one so aptly described, that breaks as opposed to the snake that hisses back and bites. Lord, I think too often we're like snakes and not worms; we don't break Lord, forgive us. Thank You for this hard word. Tough stuff, but we need to hear it and take heed to it. And the only way we could ever take heed to it is by the power of the Holy Spirit indwelling us, because absent the Holy Spirit, we have no hope of living a Holy life. So please, Lord, by the Holy Spirit, would you do this in us, for us, through us, we pray in Jesus name, amen.