

Jeremiah 14-15

The Purpose of Adversity and Affliction

J.D. Farag

We're making our way through Jeremiah. So glad you're here tonight. We left off last week, Chapter 13. We're going to pick it up in Chapter 14. Both chapters sort of go together. And woven into the fabric of these two chapters is a most powerful and profound principle.

Concerning one, there are many, but one of the many purposes of adversity and affliction, namely why it is that oftentimes God allows the adversity and the affliction in our lives.

This is by no means an exhaustive study. But there is one purpose I believe that the Lord wants us to see here, and it's that of Him turning us back to Him because we're all prone to stray from Him. And such is the case here with God through the Prophet Jeremiah concerning Judah.

I think of what David wrote in Psalm 119. He says it twice, the same thing in two different ways. In verse 67, Psalm 119, he says that basically it was a good thing that God afflicted me. It's almost like he's thanking God for the affliction because he knows absent the affliction, he would have been and gone astray.

Then you get to verse 73 of that same Psalm, the longest Psalm, the longest chapter in all of the Bible, by the way, and again, he says the same thing in a different way. He says, It was good that I was afflicted. Thank you, God, for afflicting me because had You not afflicted me, I would not have taken heed to Your Word and kept your Word.

So again, what we have before us tonight is one of the many reasons why it is that God will allow adversity and affliction. So you ready? Well, we're going to do this.

So Verse 1, **“The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah concerning the droughts. Judah [Verse 2] mourns, and her gates languish. They mourn for the land, and the cry of Jerusalem has gone up. Their nobles have sent their lads for water; they went to the cisterns and found no water. They returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded [perplexed] and covered their heads. [As if to say, I can't face this.] Because the ground is parched, [Verse 4] for there was no rain in the land, the plowmen were ashamed; they covered their heads. Yes, [Verse 5] the deer also gave birth in the field, but left because there was no grass. And the wild donkeys stood in the desolate heights; they sniffed at the wind like jackals. Their eyes failed because there was no grass.”**

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Well, we're off to a great start, right? Well, this is what God does. Whatever it takes. He'll allow the droughts, the affliction, which in that day, you have to understand in that agricultural society, this was life and death. If there was no rain, there were no crops, and if there were no crops, there was no food. And if there was no food, that meant you would starve to death. This was a matter of life and death.

Now, let's talk about why. Because God wants to get their attention. Well, that would get my attention. I think we do err greatly when adversity strikes, when in affliction, we don't stop and consider and inquire of the Lord. Lord, what do You want me to see? You got my attention. What do You want me to see here? There must be a reason why You've allowed this drought to strike. There must be something that You're wanting to show me. Because the implication here is that heretofore You've not had my attention. And it came to this, and You had to allow this in order to get my attention. You got my attention. Good. We need to talk. We need to talk about a few things here.

Verse 7, **“Oh, Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do it for Your name's sake. [This is Jeremiah now pleading as we're going to see him do throughout] For our backslidings are many, we have sinned against You. O [Verse 8] the Hope of Israel, his Savior in time of trouble, why should You be like a stranger in the land, and like a traveler who turns aside to tarry for a night? Why [Verse 9] should You be like a man astonished, like a mighty one who cannot save? Yet You, O Lord, are in our midst, and we are called by Your name. Do not leave us!”**

I mean, this is a plea from the heart. A heartfelt plea. Oh, please! Oh, God! Yes, we have sinned greatly against You. Yes, our backslidings are many. Yes, our iniquities testify against us. But for Your namesake, – we're going to see this again. He's making this heartfelt plea, an appeal on the basis of God's goodness. And he's pleading with God, be merciful to us. Please do not leave us. Please do not forsake us.

You know, that's how it feels sometimes, right? When you're going through it, it's like, God, where are You? I don't sense that You're here. It's like my prayers are bouncing off the ceiling. You seem so distant.

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I'm not distant. I'm still in your midst. You're still called by My name. I'm still good. No matter how bad it seems, it can never change how good I am.

Verse 10, **“Thus says the Lord to this people: 'Thus they have loved to wander; they have not restrained their feet. Therefore the Lord does not accept them; He will remember their iniquity now, and punish their sins.' Then the Lord said to me, 'Do not pray for this people, for their good. When they fast, [Verse 12] I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I will not accept them. But I will consume them by the sword, by the famine and by the pestilence.”**

How are you doing so far? This sounds familiar, right? We saw this before. But this is a little bit different than the last time we read this, and here's why: God is saying that if He were to harken unto the voice of their cry and answer their prayers and accept their offerings and end the famine, they would just continue in their sin and idolatry.

Never think for a second that God wants to resort to this. God has no choice but to resort to this. And oh, by the way, spoiler alert, it works. As far as idolatry is concerned, they would learn their lesson, but it would take this in order for them to learn their lesson. God would have to refine them and purify them and teach them this lesson in the furnace of affliction by way of the sword, by way of famine, by way of pestilence.

“Then I said.” [Verse 13] And we've talked about this before. These three words: **“Ah, Lord God!”** In the English language, it doesn't even come close to expressing the intensity of what Jeremiah is doing here and saying here and pleading with the Lord here. Ah! It's an anguish. It's a painful anguish of the soul. Lord God, Ah!

And then he says this. This is interesting. **“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.”**

Now, why in the world would Jeremiah say this to the Lord? Here's what I'm thinking. It's not really all their fault, Lord. Ah, Lord God! They were told by these prophets in Your name by the way, that there's no, – come on, there's no famine coming. There's no sword coming. It's all good. **“Peace, peace! When there is no peace.”**

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And the problem is, the people, as we're about to see here in God's response to Jeremiah, they loved to have it so. In fact, they would say to these false prophets, speak to us only smooth things and we'll flock to your church and we'll give to your building fund and we'll subscribe to your social media. You just tell us what our ears are itching to hear.

And you got to know, here's Jeremiah, a lone voice in the wilderness. That doom and gloom preacher. No, come on, that's not going to happen! Here's Jeremiah prophesying as a prophet, the weeping prophet in the name of the Lord. No, that's false! Judgment is coming. Famine is coming. The sword is coming. There is no peace.

You know what Jeremiah's doing right? He's actually trying to make an excuse for the people and lay the blame at the feet of these false prophets who, – I mean, Lord, no wonder. No wonder, they're doing this because that's what they were taught. That's what they were told. Really, what You should be doing is judging the prophets, not the people. Because the people went every week and heard these false prophets say, no, it's all good. He's trying to make an excuse for the people.

What's the Lord's response to that? Oh, Verse 14. It's not good. **“And the LORD said to me, 'The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart. Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who prophesy in My name, whom I did not send, and who say, 'Sword and famine shall not be in this land'- 'By sword and famine, those prophets shall be consumed!'”**

How about that? That's not in the original text. Emphasis added. Oh, I'll take care of the prophets. Yes, Jeremiah, you're right. The prophets are to blame and I will take care of that. I'll handle that.

Well, what about the people then? Well, that's Verse 16. **“And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword; they will have no one to bury them- them nor their wives, their sons, nor their daughters- for I will pour their wickedness on them.”** They are without excuse.

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Well, wait a minute. This seems disproportionate. Because they went to church every week and they sat under the teaching and the message was always a fluff and puff. I just came up with that, by the way. You can fluff and puff. It's like... But they had a choice.

They knew what Jeremiah was prophesying over here. They just didn't want to hear it. So they flocked in great numbers, Paul to Timothy, to those who would tell them what their ears were itching to hear.

No, this is on them. This is not disproportionate. This is not unjust. They had a choice. Am I going to listen to that which I want to hear, my ears are itching to hear? Or am I willing to listen to what I don't want to hear but I need to hear it? Yeah, but it's hard. Yeah, but you need to hear it because it's life and death serious. I know you don't want to hear it. Who wants to hear that? But the choice was theirs.

I mean, they could have gone to where Jeremiah was, but they didn't. Jeremiah had to go to where they were, remember that? I think it was about Chapter 11 or Chapter 12, you know, before they threatened to kill him. He went to them. They weren't coming to him.

I mean, here he had this church - I'm just, you'll forgive the illustration, but here he had this beautiful church building, very comfortable chairs, burgundy, padded, thick padding, they have to be, and nobody showed up.

Well, where are they? They're down the street at that other church. Because that guy doesn't tell them what they need to hear. So what does Jeremiah do? Well, God says, hey, listen, they're not going to come to you, so... Nice chairs, by the way, but you need to go to them.

So he goes to the city gate where all the people are in great numbers, and he starts proclaiming and prophesying as they're walking by and looking at him and mocking him, probably spitting on him.

Jeremiah, what are you doing here? Well, you wouldn't come to my church, so I had to come to you. God told me to. I don't want to hear this. Well, tough. You've got to hear it because you have to be where I'm at and so you're going to hear what I say.

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So they actually are accountable because you have to understand that everybody knew who Jeremiah was.

Oh, I didn't know there was a church like that or a prophet like that or a prophecy like that. If I had known, I probably would have went. No, you wouldn't have. Nice try.

No, everybody knew who Jeremiah was. He's that one prophet that's just doom and gloom, judgment is coming. No, thank you.

Verse 17, **“Therefore you.”** I hope. I hope. I know I had to , – I hope you'll see what we're about to read now through that lens, the lens of God's love and the lens of God's just judgment. **“Therefore [Verse 17] you shall say this word to them: 'Let my eyes flow with tears night and day, and let them not cease. For the virgin daughter of my people has been broken with a mighty stroke, with a very severe blow. If I go out to the field, [Verse 18] then behold, those slain with the sword! And if I enter this city, then behold, those sick from famine! Yes, both prophet and priest go about in a land they do not know.’”**

Now, Jeremiah has some questions beginning in Verse 19 for the Lord. **“Have You utterly rejected Judah? Has Your soul loathed Zion? Why have You stricken us so that there is no healing for us? We looked for peace, but there was no good; and for the time of healing, and there was trouble. We acknowledge, O Lord, [Verse 20] our wickedness and the iniquity of our fathers, for we have sinned against You. [We acknowledge that.] Do not abhor us, [Verse 21] for Your name's sake. [There it is again.] Do not disgrace the throne of Your glory. Remember, do not break Your covenant with us.”**

And whenever you read, “remember,” it's not like God forgot. It's more like this: God, recall those times when You were so faithful to us, so merciful to us. Remember God, what You did in the past? Remember Your faithfulness to us?

“Are there [Verse 22] any among the idols of the nations that can cause rain?”

Oh, interesting, by the way. Baal, he was supposed to be the god of rain. And you'll forgive me for seeing the humor in this, but God's like, Oh, you think that Baal is the god of rain? Oh, Baal is the one who provides rain? (Chuckle) Watch Me now. Here comes one drought. That was not very local, but I tried. Thank you for the courtesy laugh. I appreciate it.

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Well, God did the same thing with the Egyptians. You know that every single one of those plagues was a direct , – What's the word I'm looking for? It was a direct correction against a god that the Egyptians worshipped. They worshipped the Nile. Oh, you worship the Nile, do you? Watch this. They worshipped, (Chuck) oh, this is horrible, frogs, not Farags, frogs. You like frogs, do you? Here you go.

They had, someone suggested, over 3000 gods that they looked to. The cow. Where do you think Aaron got the idea for the golden calf? That was totally an Egypt thing.

It looks like your brother Moses isn't coming. We're kind of in the market for a god. We don't have a god anymore because he's been gone for so long. So Aaron, we need a god. And Aaron's like, well, okay. And he gets all the gold, puts it in the fire and makes a golden calf.

They start worshipping and you wouldn't believe it, but it's there in the Word. It's recorded. It happened. It's unbelievable in every sense of the Word. But after the golden calf is done and they're all worshipping it in the most grotesque way, I won't get graphic, Aaron has the audacity to say to them, Behold, this is the god that delivered you out of Egypt.

And then here comes Moses. Oh, no. And again, it's unbelievable. I wouldn't believe it unless it was recorded in the account, in the narrative. But when Moses queries his brother, Aaron, What in the world have you done? You know what his response is? You know, bro, Mo, I mean, it was like, I put the gold in the fire and then poof, out came this golden calf and they all started worshipping it.

Really, is that right?

They worshipped cows. They worshipped all of these gods. Judah worshiped Baal, the rain god. And God's like, okay, well, I think we have a problem here. I'm going to have to show you who God really is, because apparently, you're confuse-a-macated. That was local too. I learned that when I first moved here.

So that we're clear here, Baal is a false god and this is a false worship. This is idolatry. And I think it is so apropos that Jeremiah would say what he says here in Verse 22. **“Are there any among the idols of the nations that can cause rain?”**

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Ask Elijah. 1 Kings 18. I mean, they're cutting themselves screaming. And I mean, they're screaming at the top of their lungs for Baal to bring rain to, for fire to come down to consume the sacrifice. I mean, after all, he's the god of weather, he's the god of rain. He's the god of fire. He's the god of thunder.

Where is your god? Elijah has some fun with it. I love that account, too. Maybe you need to yell a little bit louder. He might be in the bathroom. That's actually what the original language implies. That he's taking care of business, and so that's why he's not answering you. Maybe he's taking a nap. Maybe he's on vacation. That would be a problem. That would explain why he's not answering you.

And then finally, after he had had enough, he said, Get out of my way, pour some more water on this thing. And one time he says, okay God, You are God. I am the Lord your God that delivered you out of Egypt.

So the chapter ends with Jeremiah once again interceding on behalf of the people on the basis of God's namesake. I mean, God do this not for us, not for them. Do it for Your reputation.

Because it was kind of like when Moses interceded for the people. God made an offer to Moses that He would start all over and get rid of them and say, okay, now Moses, I'm going to use you.

I would have taken that deal right away. God made the offer because God already knew that Moses would decline. God, you can't do that because word will travel. You have a reputation and all of the surrounding people will hear that this is what You did as a God to Your people. Don't do that, Lord. And God knew that Moses would say that. This is what Jeremiah is doing here. He's interceding on behalf of the people. Now, what's God's response to this intercession, this plea?

Chapter 15, Verse 1, **"Then the Lord said to me, 'Even if Moses and Samuel stood before Me.'"**

Samuel interceded on behalf of his people. Moses interceded on behalf of the people. And the Lord is saying to Jeremiah, who's interceding on behalf of God's people, even if it were

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Moses and Samuel standing before Me interceding like you are now, **“My mind would not be favorable toward this people. Cast them out of My sight, and let them go forth. And it shall be, if they say to you, 'Where should we go?' Then you shall tell them, 'Thus, says the Lord: Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; And such as are for captivity, to the captivity.’”**

That's where. In other words, some are going to die either by the sword or famine, And the ones who survive are going to be taken captive into Babylon. **“And [Verse 3] I will appoint over them four forms of destruction,' says the Lord: 'the sword to slay, the dogs to drag, the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the earth to devour and destroy. I will [Verse 4] hand them over to trouble, to all kingdoms of the earth, because of [interesting] Manasseh the son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, for what he did in Jerusalem.”**

Whoa, what did Manasseh do? Oh, he introduced unspeakable idolatry. And you know what's really sad? His dad, Hezekiah, was one of only nine good kings in all of Judah. Northern Israel, not one. Hezekiah, his father, was one of those good kings who did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and his son Manasseh, evil. He introduced idolatry. That's what he did in Jerusalem.

“For who will have pity on you, [Verse 5] O Jerusalem? Or who will bemoan you? Or who will turn aside to ask how you are doing? You have forsaken Me,' says the Lord, 'You have gone backward. Therefore I will stretch out My hand against you and destroy you; I am weary of relenting! And [Verse 7] [Now, pay particular attention to this.] I will winnow them with a winnowing fan [Hang on to that] in the gates of the land; I will bereaved them of children; I will destroy My people, since they do not return from their ways.”

Okay, this word “fan” in Latin, is where we get our English word for tribulation. Now, this is going to make sense in a moment. What God is saying here is I have to sift them. I have to afflict them. I have to sift them with this winnowing fan. It carries with it the idea of trials and tribulations, separating the chaff from the wheat. The wicked, the evil, the sin from the sinner. That's the winnowing fan. I have to. It's the only way. There's no other way because they did not return from their way. They went their own way and it was the wrong way. And

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so I got to get them back. And this is the only way. It has to be by way of this tribulation, this winnowing fan.

“Their widows [Verse 8] will be increased to Me more than the sand of the seas; I will bring against them, against the mother of the young men, a plunderer at noonday; I will cause anguish and terror to fall on them suddenly. [This is hard, yeah?] ‘She languishes [Verse 9] who has borne seven. She has breathed her last; Her sun has gone down while it was yet day. She has been ashamed and confounded. And the remnant of them I will deliver to the sword before their enemies,’ says the Lord.”

Now, listen to Jeremiah in Verse 10. **“Woe is me, my mother, that you have borne me, a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent for interest, nor have men lent to me for interest. Every one of them curses me.”**

You know what Jeremiah's saying here? I wish I was never born. Man, you have to be really down, beat down and bust up. Have you ever been there? You're in good company, by the way.

I think of many others. Job, for example. It was so bad, so hard, so painful. The despair had taken over. Despairing even of life.

The Apostle Paul despaired of life. Came to that place, the end of themselves, where they would just cry out and say to God, it would be better if I were not even born! Would have been better if my mother never gave birth to me. That's pretty bad. Have you ever been there? It's okay. I mean, the adversity and the affliction, the difficulty and the pain and the suffering and the trials can be so hard and so intense.

I think of what Oswald Chambers said in his commentary on Job. “God never faults a man for despair.” He's not going to rebuke Jeremiah for what he just said. And please, whatever you do, don't think that Jeremiah is feeling sorry for himself because he's not. What he's doing here is he's just pouring his heart out to the Lord. The Lord already knows His heart. The Lord knows of his despair. And here's Jeremiah.

(Sighing)

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I just feel for him. I mean, the pain. He's basically saying, you know, I've never done anything to these people. I've never defrauded them. And yet they curse me. And I'm all alone. He's that lone voice. And it's like, Lord, I am such a reproach. I mean, for him to say I'm a man of contention to the whole earth, that's despair. God, it would have been better if I was never born. I actually just want to die. It's okay to tell God that. I mean, He already knows. He's all knowing, right? The emotions are so intense and he's just pouring out his heart, and it is raw.

Now, what's the Lord going to do here in response? Is He going to rebuke him? Come on, Jeremiah. Toughen up. Buck up, buttercup. I hate that, by the way. Well, here's the Lord's response.

Verse 11, **“The Lord said: 'Surely it will be well with your remnant. Surely I will cause the enemy to intercede with you in the time of adversity and in the time of affliction.’”**

Oh, thank You, Lord. I needed that. The Lord's response to Jeremiah is to comfort him, to encourage him to strengthen him. It's going to be well with you. Jeremiah, I know you're down. I know you wish you would have never been born. I know you're in deep, deep pain that nobody can know. I know. But Jeremiah, remember what I told you? I knew you before you were formed in your mother's womb. I have a calling on your life. And I know it's a hard calling, it's a lonely calling on your life. And I'm not going to release or relieve you from this calling. Instead, I'm going to renew and revive you in this calling. And He does.

Verse 12, **“Can anyone break iron, the northern iron and the bronze? Your wealth and your treasures I will give as plunder without price, because of all of your sins, throughout your territories. And I will make you cross over with your enemies into a land which you do not know. [Speaking of Babylon] For a fire is kindled in my anger, which shall burn upon you.”**

Wait a minute. Wait. Can we just go back to comforting Jeremiah? What? Whoa! What's happening here? Well, the Lord is saying, Jeremiah, I'm going to be merciful to you, but I still have to chastise and afflict Judah. There's no other way.

Verse 15. **“O Lord, You know.”** You know, I underlined that. And let me explain. Sometimes when you're going through a very, very painful trial, there's no way you could ever explain it

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to someone. They have no idea. And surely you cannot fault them for that. Even if you tried, there's no way. And even if somehow you were able to explain to them what it is that you're going through, they wouldn't be able to grasp it.

And I think that's by God's design because the Lord knows. They don't need to know. I know. You don't need to call them. Call Me, call upon Me. You don't need to look to them. Look to Me. You don't need to rely on them. Rely on Me. I have made this so complex that there's no way. I'm the only one that you can come to.

“Remember me and visit me.” Again, He's not forgotten. He's just saying, Remember, Lord, all those times when You pulled through. And now he has a request and he says, **“take vengeance for me on my persecutors.”** Nothing wrong with that. The Lord said, **“Vengeance is Mine.”** And sadly, we stop there. **“Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will repay.”** In other words, don't take matters into your own hands. I'll take care of this. Vengeance belongs to Me.

And then he says it again. **“In Your enduring patience, do not take me away. Know that for Your sake I have suffered rebuke.”** All of this pain and suffering is because of the calling on my life. He's not blaming God.

“Your words were found, [verse 16] and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart. For I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts.”

Wow! Sounds like it worked, huh. What changed? Jeremiah's circumstances haven't changed. No, what's changed is the Lord's Word. And he ate every single word of God and he feasted on it. **“Man does not live on bread alone, but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God.”**

I tell you from the bottom of my heart, there's going to come a time, and I think you're going to know what I mean when I say this. There's going to come a time when you don't want to talk to anybody. You don't want to hear what they have to say. You don't want to hear from the physician or the expert. You want to hear from the Great Physician. I don't care , – I don't want to , – I don't want to hear what they have to say. I want to hear what God has to say

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because the Word of God is life, it's the Word of life. And I'm dying here and I ain't going to make it.

And then the Lord says, My word, My word, I gave you My Word. You know what that means, right? When you give somebody your word, you're giving them your word, you're going to keep your word. God has given Jeremiah His word and he ate it up. Oh, yeah, I'm good now. I'm good now.

I'll tell you, there are times when it gets so bad that the only thing you're going to be able to hang on to is the Word of God. And God is going to speak into your life and into your situation as only He can. And it's going to be that word. Maybe a passage, maybe a verse and you've read it a million times before. But now it's for you, this word, fitly spoken.

And listen to what he says. **“Your word was to me the joy and the rejoicing. It revived my heart.”** It lifted me up. There's almost a sanctified boasting here, **“For I am called by Your name.”** I like that. **“O Lord God of hosts.”**

Verse 17. **“I did not sit in the assembly of the mockers, nor did I rejoice. I sat alone because of Your hand.”**

This is reminiscent of Psalm 1. Blessed is the man who does not sit in the seat where the council of mockers are. Blessed is the man, – He will be like a tree that is planted in a famine. And there happened to be a famine. How timely. He will be like a tree that is flourishing, even though all the other trees around them were withering.

But then verse 18, **“Why is my pain perpetual and my wound incurable, which refuses to be healed? Will You surely be to me [Now hang in there.] Will you surely be to me like an unreliable stream, as waters that fail?”**

Oh, Jeremiah. You know what he's asking the Lord? He's saying, Lord, you're not going to fail me, right? I mean, I heeded the call that you have on my life. I'm suffering because of the call that you have on my life. But I am in such pain. And this is perpetual pain, there's no end in sight. Lord, You're not going to fail me, right?

Wait a minute, Jeremiah, we were doing good there for a second. What happened? Well, what happened is what happens to the best of us. Jeremiah, like the many before him and

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the many after him, is having a crisis of faith. He's having doubts about whether or not God is going to get him through this.

Listen when you're in that much pain , – I think about John the Baptist, who knew. There he sits in this dungeon of a prison. And he thought for sure, I mean, come on, this is John the Baptist we're talking about. For sure Jesus is going to get me out of here. But the days keep going and He's not getting me out of this. He's failed me.

So what does he do? He sends these guys to ask Jesus because now he's riddled with doubt. Are you the one or is another one coming? Because I thought for sure, I had fully expected that I would not be here that long. It seems that You've failed me, and I'm starting to have doubts now.

Again, please don't come down too hard on Jeremiah. Many a man of God, many a woman mightily used of God has had those moments when the despair gives way to doubt. Now what's God going to say in response? **“Therefore thus says the Lord:”** [verse 19] Now I want you to watch this. This is key. **“If [if] you return, then I will bring you back; You shall stand before Me. If [Second if] you take out the precious from the vile, [Hang on to that.] you shall be as My mouth. Let them return to you, but you must not return to them.”**

Wait. What? What's God saying to Jeremiah? Jeremiah, the pull is strong, I know the pull is strong. I know you're in perpetual pain. Come back. If you will return to Me. Don't go their way. They need to come your way. If you will return, then I will bring you back. Draw near to Me; I'll draw near to you.

You know, again, in those times of doubt, it comes packaged with this belief, it's wrong, but we think that somehow God has distanced Himself from us. No, I'm still here. You're the one that has distanced yourself from Me in your doubt. So you need to come back.

What's this, **“take out the precious from the vile”**? Oh, He's saying to Jeremiah, if you will take out the good from this vile of affliction, and there is good in this vile of affliction, this cup of suffering, this vile of perpetual pain. If you will extract from it the good that I have in it, that I always work out because of it, you shall be as My mouth. And let them that are pulling you, because you're looking at them going, man, God, why didn't You call them? Why

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me? This is a lonely calling. This is really hard and there's no way anybody will have any idea of how hard it is. And the Lord's saying, you need to come back to Me and you need to take the good out of this affliction.

Notice it's not a rebuke, but once again, a restoration, telling him to return to Him and put his trust in Him. If there's ever a time to draw near to the Lord and be in the Word and in prayer, it's when you're in pain.

Verse 20, **“And I will make you to this people a fortified bronze wall; and they will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you to save you and deliver you, says the Lord. 'I will deliver you from the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem you from the grip of the terrible.’”**

Oh, I love it! I love it when the chapter and with it the Bible study ends like this. I mean, the last couple of weeks we've ended on a pretty sour note. We're all gonna die! Let's close in prayer.

[Laughter]

No! I'm going to deliver you! Oh, there's still a fight, but they're not going to prevail. I'm going to save you. I'm going to deliver you from the hand of the wicked. And I'm going to redeem you.

I mean, again, this is God's word. He can't , – I know this isn't proper English or sentence structure, you'll forgive me. He can't not keep His word. Let me try that again. This is His word. It is an unbreakable promise. He made the promise; He cannot go back on His word.

Jeremiah, snap out of it. Come back. Get over here, boy. I got you. I made this promise to you. I'm going to save you. I'm going to deliver you. I know it doesn't seem like it. I know the trial is so intense and the pain is so perpetual. It doesn't seem like there's any way. Oh, but there is. I'm going to do it. I'm going to deliver you.

Because see he's doubting the deliverance. God, you've always delivered me up to this point, but it doesn't look good right now, I just don't know. And here's why we do that and we do that, you know. Because we don't know but we try to figure it out.

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Because see, not knowing means we're not in control and we don't want to not be in control. We feel so helpless and hopeless because we don't know what God's doing. We want to know because then we feel like we're more in control.

And God is like, No, I'm not going to let you know. I know what I'm doing. I know you don't know what I'm doing, but you need to trust Me.

Oh, I guess they call that faith. Walking by, living by faith not sight. Because see, we don't see it. God I don't see how you're going to do it. Oh, you want to walk by sight then. You want to see it because after all, seeing is believing.

Well actually it's the opposite; believing is seeing. If you will but believe, then you will see. You need to believe Me. I'm going to deliver you. I know everything that's happening to you contradicts My promise to you because you're looking at the circumstances. Look at Me. Come back to Me. Hello? Back over here. You're focused on them. You're focused on that. You're looking at that. No wonder. Come back.

You know we do this. (Making hand gestures of 'eye to eye')

[laughter]

Get your eyes back on Me. Get your eyes back on Me. I promised you that I was going to do it.

Yeah, but when?

I'm not going to tell you when. Just trust Me.

How?

I'm not I going to tell you how. Just trust Me.

Lord, okay.

I mean, if you really think about it, what choice do we have? We're actually going to talk a little bit about that on Sunday. We have to wait patiently for the Lord. And the problem is we hate to wait.

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See, Jeremiah is asking the Lord to do this now. Let's get this show on the road. No, not right now. I know what I'm doing. I will repay. I will take vengeance. I will deliver you. But I'm going to do it in My time, My way, and for My glory. Because My timing is always perfect, and you'll see. And you'll be glad too, by the way, that I didn't do it on your terms, on your calendar, on your schedule. I'm going to do this, and when I do this, when I deliver you, it will be perfect, because I'm perfect. You just wait and you just trust in Me and keep your eyes on Me. Because happy is he , – **“He will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee.”**

One last thing, in fact, why don't you stand. We'll have David come up and close us in song.

Oh, man, if you're here tonight or watching online and the Lord knows what you're going through and it's not looking good. The fact of the matter is, truth be made known, I ain't getting out of this one. Oh, God delivered me in the past, but this one, this is how it ends. This is it. I ain't making it out of this one. This one is really bad.

Oh, wait a minute. God's given you His word.

Yeah but pastor, with all due respect, you don't understand.

Oh, yes I do. You have no idea.

Yeah, but pastor, with all due respect, this situation is impossible.

Oh, really?

It's so painful.

Oh, really?

Yeah, I don't know, I don't know how God's going to do this.

Really? Hmm.

God's the God of the impossible.

Yeah, but this thing is so messed up. The situation is so bad.

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Yeah, but God's good. And God's made a promise to you, and your situation will not have the final word. God will. God's not done yet. God will have the final word.

Yeah, but I just, I just don't see how it's possible.

Well, why don't you just get out of God's way?

Oh, by the way, and I say this just from personal experience, stop trying to help Him out. You want to help? Don't help. Because every time we try to help God, we just make it worse, right? Just maybe the word for you is **“Be still and know that I am God.”**

Just wait. Just wait. Do nothing. Let me do this. I'm going to , – the battle belongs to Me. You're not going to have to fight this one. I'm going to do this in a way that you could have never imagined. And it will be exceedingly, abundantly above and beyond anything you could have ever possibly even asked for.

Just let Me be God and let Me do what I promised you I would do. And let Me just do it in My way. You just be still, and know that I am God. I'm going to deliver you. I'm going to deliver you.

Father in heaven, thank You. I know that there are many that are struggling, weary, hurting, perplexed. Maybe doubt has set in. Despair is taking over. Lord, I pray that this that we've seen and heard and even eaten from tonight in Your Word, even though our circumstances don't change, that we will have changed. You will have changed our heart, our perspective. That we would stop striving, stop doubting even, and start trusting that You will do what You say You're going to do. You'll see us through.

Lord, You are the deliverer, You are our Redeemer and our Savior. And as You promised to Jeremiah, you will save, deliver, and redeem. Oh, Lord, thank You. Thank You Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen.