

Jeremiah 7:1-34 – May 12, 2022
Why God Would Say Not To Pray
J.D. Farag

Good evening. You can be seated. So glad you're here tonight. How you doing?

Blessed? All right!

Also, I want to welcome those of you that are joining us online. Thursday nights we're going through the Bible in our verse-by-verse study, book-by-book, chapter-by-chapter. We're currently in the book of Jeremiah, Chapter 7 tonight.

So I'll have you turn there if you're not there already. I know what you're thinking because I can read your minds.

[Laughter]

So you've done the math and think there's 52 chapters in the book of Jeremiah. And that's how many weeks there are, right, in a year?

So the question is, is it going to take us a whole year to get through the book of Jeremiah?

No, I'm hoping the rapture comes first.

But a couple of things before we get started. Save the date of Sunday, June 5th, for our water baptism. It'll be after second service, 1:00. You don't need to sign up, just show up.

If you've never been water baptized, you'll certainly want to do that. It is a command in Scripture. Not necessary for salvation, of course, but it is an expression outwardly of an inward commitment of salvation.

Also, the following Tuesday is going to be our prayer meeting here in the sanctuary at 7 p.m., and I sure hope you can join us. And this is probably as good of a time as any, just by way of a friendly reminder to make sure your phones are silenced before we get started.

And why don't we begin with a word of prayer? If you would, please join with me.

Oh, Lord, thank You so much! Lord, would You settle us down now and quiet our hearts and clear our minds, and by the Holy Spirit, help us to focus our attention so our minds don't wander.

Lord, I know that the enemy doesn't want us to hear what it is that You have for us tonight here in Your Word, as always is the case.

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So Lord, we're just going to ask You to keep us focused so our minds don't wander. And Lord, for this chapter that we have before us tonight, we desperately and readily admit that we desperately need for the Holy Spirit to be our teacher and our guide. Some tough stuff, but boy, it's so good. It's so needed, as hard as it is to hear.

Lord, we need to hear it and we need to take heed to it. And absent the Holy Spirit, we have no hope of doing that. So Lord, You're going to have to do that for us, in us, in this time that we have together, in Your Word tonight, we pray in Jesus' name, amen and amen!

All right, so this chapter is going to answer what is arguably one of the most stunning questions in all of scripture as to why it is that God would say not to pray, which is what He's going to tell Jeremiah, as we're about to see. God, through the prophet Jeremiah, says not to pray for this people because God won't hear those prayers.

And again, as we're going to see, the reason God won't hear those prayers is because of the wickedness and the abominations on the part of His people in His temple. God knows the end from the beginning, the beginning from the end. Jeremiah does not.

And God already knows that their heart has been hardened, their mind has been made up, and as such, their fate has been sealed. And He's, in effect, releasing Jeremiah from praying for them.

So before you start scratching people off your prayer list, let's get into this, and we'll see why it is that God would tell Jeremiah that.

Verse 1, "The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, "Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, 'Hear the word of the Lord, all you of Judah who enter in at these gates to worship the Lord!"

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.

[Verse 4] Do not trust in these lying words, saying, 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.'

Okay, let's - We're off to a horrible start, just so you know. So I need you to think through this with me and use your God-given intellect and imagination here, okay?

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Beginning in Chapter 7, on through to Chapter 10, it's known as the Temple Preachings or the Temple Prophecies because Jeremiah now has been commanded by God to go to the entrance to the temple and proclaim and prophesy and preach this message.

And he's going to do this at the very entrance there in Jerusalem to the temple where he will have the most people and the right people to hear the right message at the right time. They're not going to receive it.

God's going to remind Jeremiah of this, as we're going to see later on in the chapter. But God is now commanding him to declare this, preach this, proclaim this at the entrance to the temple, this public preaching. And this is what I mean by we're off to a horrible start because we already see here in, specifically verse 4, the response to Jeremiah.

And it's that of this is the temple, it's all good, nothing's going to happen; we're in the temple. They just assumed, and as again, we're going to see put their trust in the temple.

Nah, God's not going to destroy the temple. This is the temple, the temple. the temple of the Lord.

Oh, really?

Verse 5, “For if [keyword] you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if [keyword again] you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, if [Verse 6] you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place or walk [what a list] after other gods to your hurt, then [Verse 7] [Notice the “if” and “then”] then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever.”

Now, very important; please don't miss this. The love of God is unconditional. The promises of God oftentimes are conditional. If... Then...

If you do this, then I will do this. Replete throughout the pages of Holy Writ we find promise after promise based on and predicated upon the condition that we do something, and if [if] we do that, then God will do this.

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Example - There's plenty, but let's take... okay, we'll take *Proverbs 3:5-6*, very well known, right? **“Lean not on your own understanding. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and acknowledge the Lord in all your ways.”**

This is a conditional promise. If you will lean not unto your own understanding, if you will trust in the Lord with all of your heart, if you will acknowledge the Lord in all of your ways, then the Lord will straighten out your paths. He will make straight your ways. He will direct your paths. It's a conditional promise.

So in other words, if those conditions are not met, then we cannot expect that God is going to direct our paths because we're not acknowledging Him, we're not trusting in Him. We're leaning on our own understanding. And those are conditions that have to be in place before God will do what He promises to do.

Again, replete throughout Scripture, there are these conditional, but please, please, please, the love of God is unconditional. But there are promises in the Word of God that are conditional. And this is such a case here with Judah. If, if, if, then I will.

Now, it's important to understand, and there's a reason I'm going to mention this at this juncture. At this point, I mean, everything is just going so well.

I mean, the temple is packed, standing room only, overflow filled, no parking spaces, no room in the children's ministry classrooms. I mean, this was the happening place. It was going, growing, and glowing!

Now, can you imagine how they would have received this from Jeremiah, God speaking through, prophesying through Jeremiah? And they're looking at Jeremiah going, what is your problem? What are you talking about? Look at this temple. Well, look at how many people are coming.

Oh, wait a minute. I'm sorry. There must be a huge misunderstanding here, because apparently it seems like you have made synonymous the new numerical growth with the blessing of God.

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Wow, God must be here. I mean, look at how many people are here. Well, if that's the case, then what about this really small church over here out in the middle of nowhere that nobody really knows about?

God's not there because there's not very many people there? Where is it, how is it, when is it that we bought into this notion that just because there seems to be numerical growth that the blessing of God is there? It's, hey, this is the happening place, man.

You might want to ask Laodicea about that. You know I'm talking about, right, Revelation Chapter 3? I would venture to say that you would have pulled into that parking lot at Calvary Chapel of Laodicea - I'm sorry - I'm just going to use that just for purposes of illustration.

And you'd have been hard pressed to find a parking spot. That place was packed, man. There were so many people there. There was a problem, though.

Jesus wasn't there. In fact, He's trying to get back in. He's actually knocking on the door. Hey, can I? Can I come in and sup with you and you with me? He wasn't even there.

And that's what was happening here. God was not in this. And they had put their trust in, taken pride in the temple.

Look at what's happening, man. This place is packed. And here's Jeremiah. He's out front. Where's security when you need them?

He's telling everybody, Amend your ways and your doings. If you thoroughly execute judgment and look at this list, can you believe it? What they were doing in how they were treating each other?

If I'm not mistaken, I think it was only one of these that has to do with the vertical relationship between man and God. But the rest were horizontal in how they were treating each other.

They were oppressing the stranger, the fatherless, the widow. They were shedding innocent blood; we're going to talk about that in a moment, very graphically, by the way.

They were walking after other gods to their own hurt. But that didn't seem to matter. They were doing all of these things.

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Oh, again, it's going to get much worse as we're about to see. *Verse 8*, **“Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will you [You ready for this list, verse 9, ready or not, here it comes.**

“Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know, and then come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, ‘We are delivered to do all these abominations’?”

What?

Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. Okay, let's just step back here for a moment.

So they're trusting in lying words that have no profit. And they're stealing from each other. They're murdering each other. They're committing adultery with each other. They're bearing false witness against each other.

Oh, they're burning incense to Baal. They're walking after other gods whom they do not know. And then this is Monday through Saturday, and they come to church on Sunday. And they stand before the Lord in the House of the Lord and have the audacity to say it's all good. ‘We are delivered to do all these abominations.’

I mean, after all, look at, look at the temple. Look how blessed we are. Look how many we are.

Verse 11, **“Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it,” says the Lord.**

Okay, couple of thoughts here real quick. First of all, this sounds familiar, right?

As well it should, because this is the verse that Jesus quotes when He cleanses the temple and overthrows the money changers' tables. He quotes this first, right here. **“You've made My house a den of thieves.”**

You're hiding thieves in the temple. You're doing these things in the temple. This is My house. And you're coming into My house and you're doing this? I've seen it with My own eyes. You've turned My house, My church, My temple, My place of worship into a den of thieves.

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“But go now [Verse 12] to My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel.

And now [Verse 13] because you have done all these works,” says the Lord, “and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you, but you did not answer, therefore I will do to the house, which is called by My name, in which you trust [Did you catch that?]

Oh, you put your trust in the temple? You put your trust in your numerical strength. You put your trust in that which I gave you, which is what He says next.

“In which you trust, and to this place which I gave to you and your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And [Verse 15] I will cast you out of My sight as I have cast out all your brethren, the whole posterity of Ephraim.”

Interesting reference to Shiloh.

What was Shiloh?

Well, it was a city close to proximity to Jerusalem. It was for what some believe to be about 350 years-plus the location of the tabernacle, the tent of meeting.

And this is why Jeremiah is told by God to have them compare what happened in Shiloh and to Shiloh with them there in Jerusalem. Because what happened in Shiloh was the tabernacle was destroyed.

Why was the tabernacle destroyed?

Because of their wickedness. In other words, Jerusalem, Judah, you remember Shiloh, your forefathers? You remember the tabernacle in Shiloh? You remember how it stood as a place where I did great things, the tent of meeting, the shekinah glory of God, the Ark of the Covenant?

This was the tabernacle that would then be replaced by the temple. Same design, but it was a temporary structure that would point to and foreshadow the permanent temple there in Jerusalem. And for 350 years, this was a place of worship My name, My house, my tabernacle, and it was blessed.

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And then because of the wickedness, it was destroyed. The Philistines and the Assyrians would ultimately destroy it and take the Northern Tribes of Israel captive.

And Judah, Southern Judah is going to follow in the same footsteps. And that's why He brings up Shiloh.

What's the point and what's the application to our lives?

I think we would do well to remember what's happened in the past and bring it into the present, lest we suffer the same fate in the future.

Let it be a warning to you. I'm pleading with you. I'm getting up early in the morning and I'm trying to call you, but you're not picking it up, you're not answering. I'm pleading with you, I'm warning you, and you will not respond.

I'm doing everything and stopping at nothing. And I'm trying to keep you from suffering the same fate as Shiloh, but that's the direction you're heading. That's exactly what's going to happen.

And you know what's sad? That's exactly what happened, **“Therefore [And here it is, verse 16] [We're going to spend a little bit time on this] [This is God now speaking to Jeremiah] do not pray for this, people.”**

Now, stop right there. Because the implication here is that Jeremiah was praying for this people; otherwise, why would God make it a point to say don't pray for them, were it not that he was praying for them?

And He says, **“Nor lift up a cry or pray for them.”**

I mean he was crying out to God on behalf of the people of God, and he was interceding on their behalf because he then says, **“Nor make intercession to Me.”**

And here's why, Jeremiah. **“For I will not hear you.”**

Jeremiah is being released from praying for this people because, again, God knows the end from the beginning. God knows that they will not respond, and God is, in effect, sparing and releasing Jeremiah from the burden of praying for them when He knows, God knows that they will not repent. They will not change their ways. They will not return to Him.

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So just stop praying for them.

Now, again, as I mentioned, before you start crossing people off of your prayer list, let's be careful here and prayerful here, really, because there does come a time when God will release you and He'll make it clear.

Just you know what? You don't need to pray for them anymore. Don't pray for them anymore.

Now, we may not know why. It could be assumed, I suppose, in all fairness, that God already knows that their heart is hardened, their mind is made up, and their fate is sealed. And there's no need to pray for them. But just God is releasing you.

There are times, and I know in my own life, and I've heard from friends of mine over the years where people; they just came to this place. We're talking 15, 20 years, not that they're giving up on the person, but they just sense this release from the Lord to not pray for them anymore.

Now, it could very well be that God has somebody else praying for them. We don't know. But God will oftentimes deem it necessary to tell us or release us from praying for someone. I know of only one other time in Scripture when God says not to pray, and it's found in Exodus 14 at the Red Sea and very different set of circumstances.

But God basically tells Moses to stop praying and start moving because you're going to cross on dry ground. I'm going to part this Red Sea.

And here's Moses crying out to God, Oh, God!

And God's like, Why are you still crying to Me? Stop. Stop praying and get moving.

Now, why do I bring that up?

Because, and please hear me out on this, and I'll speak for myself. I know in my own life that I have taken a license for inaction. I've made prayer an excuse for inaction.

Well, I'm still praying about it.

Oh, okay. Wait. God's like, Why are you still praying? Stop praying. Get moving!

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See, prayer can sometimes - And it sounds so noble, right? What are you going to say to that?

Well, I'm still praying about it.

Oh, okay. You still praying about it five years later?

I'm still praying about it.

Really?

Five more years, ten years go by.

I'm still praying about it.

Maybe you need to do something about it. Stop praying. Get moving.

There does come a time where God will say, not only I release you from praying for them, but God will say to you, You know what? I heard your prayer. I've already answered it. Why are you still praying? I've already given you the answer.

Can't you see the Red Sea? I just parted it, hello? Look. Look at the dry ground. Why are you still praying for something I just did? Now get moving. Go. Step out. Move!

Okay, that's a - You okay? That's a touchy topic, isn't it?

The presupposition here is that we actually do pray. Now, wait a minute. Maybe we need to talk about this.

And again, I'll speak for myself on this one. One of the things that I'm learning in my walk with the Lord when it comes to prayer is there's no such thing as praying enough or too much.

Have you ever heard that expression, or perhaps you said it, and I don't mean to be mean or derogatory, but I remember many years ago I heard someone say to me, "I'm prayed up."

I'm like, you, what? How do you do that? How do you - Do you just come to the point where you say, okay, I prayed enough.

There's no such thing.

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I think the Apostle Paul said it like this, “Pray continually,” which by the way, means that when you pray, you don't have to be on your knees, nothing wrong with that. It's not the posture of your body, it's the posture of your heart. And your eyes closed because if I am praying continually...

Well, what about when I'm driving? I kind of need my eyes open when I'm driving.

But I do a lot of prayer when I'm driving. I've already confessed that, so I'm not going to tell you about that anymore. But I do my best pray when I'm when I'm driving actually, especially I'm looking for a parking spot, but...

Pray continually, without ceasing. You don't stop.

There's, as one said it, in fact, authored a book by the same name, it's this constant conscious communion with God where all day, every day, throughout the day, you're just in this constant prayer, talking with the Lord, and He's talking with you all day.

Sometimes I'll catch myself or my daughter will come up to my office and she's like, What are you doing? You talking to yourself? Is it that bad or are you losing it? What's the matter with you?

No, I'm praying. I pray out loud because sometimes it's important to hear yourself pray.

And by the way, when you pray out loud, you're also more focused in your prayer. When you pray in your mind, it's very different, right?

Because you're - then all of a sudden, you kind of wander off, and by the way, have you noticed this? I'm sure you have.

But when you set your foot to pray, doesn't all HE double toothpicks break loose?

I mean, emails start coming in, phone starts ringing, everything starts happening, someone's at the door, wrong address. Someone's on the phone, wrong number.

Hmm, I see what's happening here.

Kids start fighting. Oh, really? Right now, you're going to start fighting right now when I'm going to just start praying? I see what's going on here.

You know why that is, right?

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Satan knows that prayer is the deciding factor. So he will do everything he can to keep a Christian from praying because he knows that when a Christian prays, it is game-over for him. It is game-over. So he'll do everything he can to dislodge the weapon of prayer from our hands.

I love the illustration, best illustration ever heard. You've got this fight between two opponents, and when one wields a knife, that changes everything.

So the opponent will do everything he can to get the knife out of the hand of his opponent because he knows that that knife is the deciding factor.

Well, that knife is prayer, and Satan knows it. And he'll do everything he can to dislodge the knife of prayer from the hand of a Christian because he knows it's his defeat when a Christian prays.

That's - by the way, that's also why it is that prayer is hard work. When you pray, it's hard to pray because, and by the way, for those of you that have insomnia, pray and read the Bible. You're out like a light.

It's like, oh, no, he's praying, he's reading the Bible! Put him to sleep. We can't have that.

Well, I think you got the point.

Verse 17, this is rhetorical, of course, but wow, chilling. **“Do you not see what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?”** [*Get this, verse 18*] **“The children gather wood, the fathers kindle the fire, and the women need dough to make cakes for [And hold on to this] the Queen of heaven.”**

This is a family affair. You've got the kids and the parents all doing this together, worshiping, preparing, **“And they pour out drink offerings to other gods that they may provoke me to anger. Do they provoke Me to anger?”** [*Verse 19*] **says the Lord. “Do they not provoke themselves, to the shame of their own faces?”**

Okay, you know, last couple of weeks, probably two or three weeks now, we've talked about this dynamic of disconnecting and disenfranchising ourselves from the application of the text.

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Let me expound on that. A chapter like this, really a book like the book of Jeremiah, it is so easy for us as Christians to disenfranchise ourselves from what we're reading under the banner of, well, this is for them.

This isn't for me, and besides, I mean, come on. I would never do that. Making cakes for the Queen of heaven? That doesn't apply to me.

I'm pretty sure there's not one of us here in this Bible study tonight that has this verse or this passage on their wallpaper, you know, like a memory verse, my life verses Jeremiah Chapter 7, they made cakes for the Queen of heaven. What?

Well, not so fast. Does the Queen of Heaven sound familiar to you? Alive and well today. She's known as the "Mother Mary."

To them in Jeremiah's day, this was Ishtar, the goddess of, you'll forgive me, sex, fertility, prosperity, lust, Ishtar. And by the way, the Queen of heaven, also, you'll see these depictions of mother and child. And they're the creepiest things you'll ever see. This is not Mary and the baby Jesus.

This is a pagan mother-son god that was worshiped then. You know, again, Satan's the master counterfeiter, and the counterfeit authenticates and validates the genuine.

That's why you'll never see a counterfeit \$70 bill. There is no such thing as a genuine.

So you're always going to have the counterfeit, the antithesis. This is why there are false Christs and an anti-Christ and not false Buddhas or false Muhammads.

This Queen of Heaven was a pagan goddess that they worshiped and made offerings to, and this was an abomination to the Lord.

Now, getting back to this disconnecting or disenfranchising ourselves from the application of the texts, we're about to see it get even more graphic here in a moment.

But the prophetic parallels to what was happening in Jeremiah's day are happening in our day today. This pagan worship is alive and well. They're worshiping these pagan deities in these forms.

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Verse 20, **“Therefore thus says the Lord God: “Behold, My anger and My fury will be poured out on this place, on man and on beast, on the trees of the field, and on the fruit of the ground. And it will burn and not be quenched.”**

Thus says the Lord of hosts [*Verse 21*] the God of Israel: “Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices and eat meat. For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices.”

Just hang on; this is all going to make sense in a moment.

“But this [*Verse 23*] is what I commanded them, saying, ‘Obey My voice, and I will be your God.” [*Because obedience is better than sacrifice*]

God is not diminishing the sacrifice. He's emphasizing the obedience because see, the sacrifice that you're bringing into My house, in My name, My temple, you're doing this, but it means nothing to Me because there's no obedience to Me.

You can sacrifice all you want. And by the way, I never commanded this or desired this. What I desire is obedience over sacrifice.

‘Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.’

I don't want you to rush past this because at first read it's easily missed. I want it to be well with me. In fact, truth be made known, I pray to this end. I want things to go well in my life. Lord, bless my life. I want things to go good. I want it to be well with me.

And here's God going, I want that too for you. Oh, I just, I so want to answer that prayer and grant you that grace, but you've not obeyed Me. You've not obeyed me.

“Yet [*Verse 24*] they did not obey or incline their ear but followed the counsels and the dictates of their evil hearts and went backward and not forward.”

Oh, isn't that how it is? I mean, listen, it takes no effort to backslide. It takes absolutely no effort to backslide. I mean, it's the inclination of our hearts.

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And if we - this is - by the way, you've, I'm sure, heard this expression, perhaps again, even said this yourself. And again, I'm not trying to be derogatory or mean or harsh or anything, but you know that saying, 'oh, just follow your heart'?

No! Don't follow your heart. We're going to see in Jeremiah the heart is deceitfully wicked. Don't follow your heart, the dictates of their evil hearts! Don't follow your heart!

Follow the Lord! Your heart will deceive you. It's called self-deception. Your heart is deceitfully wicked. Don't follow your heart! Your heart will lead you down the wrong path, and you will go backward, not forward.

And it won't take much. It's almost like this magnetic pull away from God when you follow your heart. The dictates, councils and dictates: that's specificity and detail in what they were doing.

I have a question I want to ask. I think you would agree that God has everything, and you know that saying, 'what do you give to the person that has everything'?

What is it that we could ever give to God that He does not necessarily have?

Answer: obedience.

That's the one thing that we can give to God that He does not necessarily have. And that's what he's saying here. I want your obedience. I don't want your sacrifice.

Listen, this was what they did. They offered the sacrifices. Again, he's not diminishing or dismissing the importance of the sacrifices.

But what He's saying is your sacrifices are meaningless and pointless. In fact, they are repulsive to Me because they're not accompanied with obedience.

How is it for you as a parent when your children do something for you or give something to you, but they're not obedient? How do you respond to that?

Every year, Father's Day, my birthday, which I don't really want to talk about, and Christmas, my kids will ask me, Baba, what do you want for your birthday?

And now, it's just an ongoing joke, but I always say, I just want your obedience. And they laugh - Ha-ha-ha - what do you really want?

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No, I really want your obedience. Don't go out and buy me an expensive gift with my money anyway and give it to me. I just want your obedience, just obey me. That will bless me. That's the best gift you can give to me is your obedience.

I mean, don't go out and sacrifice and make something or buy something or do something and then give it to me if you're not going to be obedient to me because it's almost an insult.

It's almost like this: You're trying to overcompensate for your disobedience by offering this.

You know, this sacrifice? You know what I had to go through and do to get this for you?

I see what you're doing here. You know what's harder than a life of obedience?

Wait for it.

A life of disobedience.

Let me say the same thing in a different way. It is infinitely more difficult to live in disobedience of the Lord than it is obedience to the Lord.

Now, we need to be careful again here because a holy life comes vis a vis the Holy Spirit. This is not something we can manufacture in and of ourselves. We can't make vows or promises. God, I'm going to be more obedient. I'm going to try harder.

No, no, stop, stop, stop, stop, stop! No, you're not. You need the Holy Spirit and the power of the Holy Spirit to live a holy life.

I know this is deeply profound. Holy Spirit = Holy life. Obedience: It comes by the Holy Spirit indwelling us, enabling us, empowering us. It's the 'how' of the Holy Spirit to obey the 'what' of the Holy Word. It's how it works.

And the man or woman to be pitied is the man or the woman who tries in their own strength, in the energy of their own flesh to walk in obedience. It will never happen. It will never happen, try as you may.

Make all the promises you want. Make all the vows you want. Lord, From here on, I vow to You, I promise You.

And, well, I'll just speak for myself. I'll make it about maybe five steps, five minutes, and I've already messed up.

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Well, I am sorry, Lord, okay, I'm going to try harder!

And the Lord's like, Would you please stop doing that? It's not going to happen. This obedience comes by way of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 25, “Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have even sent to you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them [There it is again] yet they did not obey Me or incline their ear but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers.

“Therefore you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not obey you. You shall also call to them, but they will not answer you.”

Oh, Jeremiah, I can't wait to meet you, Jeremiah. What must have this been like for you? I think it was, some believe, about 42 years. His ministry was 42 years of this. Preaching, prophesying, proclaiming, and they would not only not hear or heed, but instead they would stiffen their neck. They would not listen.

I am convinced that if Jeremiah were alive today, he would never be invited to speak at a pastors' conference. I mean, come on, look, he's had nobody respond to his preaching. You know who we should get is Jonah. He had a whole city repent. Let's have Jonah come and he'll be the main speaker at our... But not Jeremiah; he had not one person, not one person.

Again, this goes back to how we think in our day, right? It's all about the numbers, the followers. It's all about the likes, the subscribers, the more followers, the more subscribers, the more likes.

Verse 28, “So you shall say to them, ‘This is a nation that does not obey the voice of the Lord their God nor receive correction. [Hang onto that] Truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouth.”

This is quite astonishing imagery. Truth is dead. They're going to schedule the memorial service for truth. It's perished, and it's been cut off from their mouth. In other words, there's no truth for...something...they cut it before it could...it's gone, it's dead.

And what about this “they don't obey”?

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Okay, we got that; we're getting our minds around that. But “nor would they receive correction.”

Hmm, so if they did receive correction, would they have obeyed?

Yes.

What's the takeaway here?

Well, I think the lesson here is very clear. We need to be honest with ourselves and we need to ask ourselves if we are among those who obey the Lord because we're numbered among those who receive correction from the Lord.

You know, in what we affectionately refer to as the pastoral epistles, Titus and Timothy, we have the list of the qualification of elders.

It's unfortunate because it says and is translated and rendered “able to teach.” That's better understood, teach-able, teachable.

An elder must be teachable because if you think about it, they're not really able to teach unless they're teach-able. They have to be able to receive correction. They have to be teachable.

We had an acronym on the mainland; I'm careful nowadays using this acronym because, well, we live in a day and age where you just about can't say anything about anyone, any time, any how, any way. But I'm going to anyway.

The acronym is FAT. Just stay with me.

The person that we were considering to serve in ministry or be on staff or certainly serve in any position of leadership, they had to be FAT. Fat's okay too, just saying.

But they had to be faithful, available, and perhaps more importantly, teachable, FAT. If they weren't teachable, no-can, no-can. They have to be teachable. They have to be able to receive correction.

I think about - my wife and I were just talking about this again, Roy Hession, in that classic work, 'The Calvary Road.' I don't recommend it for the faint of heart. It'll convict your heart to the core. But he draws this comparison between the worm and the snake.

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And you step on the worm, and you break the worm, and the worm just breaks. But you step on the snake S-s-s-s- it hisses at you and bites back at you, and it doesn't break. I think we're snakes.

Is it okay if I say that? It's true.

Sadly, truth be made known, we're more like the snake than we are the worm. When we're stepped on and broken, we don't receive it. We hiss back at it like the snake.

I heard - this is, again, many years ago on the mainland - I heard someone say, everybody wants to be a servant until they're treated like one.

I'm going to let that sit for just a moment, and let the Holy Spirit take it from there.

We're bond slaves, right? We have to be teachable because receiving correction is the catalyst for obedience.

Verse 29, “Cut off your hair and cast it away [I don't have that problem, too late; that ship sailed already] [It's a symbol of mourning and lamentation]

Take up a lamentation on the desolate heights for the Lord has rejected and forsaken the generation of His wrath.’ For the children of Judah [Verse 30] have done evil in My sight,” says the Lord. “They have set their abominations in the house, which is called by My name, to pollute it.”

Do you realize what they did? If you can imagine, they brought these abominations into the temple. They brought them in. They set them up in the temple.

That'd be like you bringing - I won't get too graphic here - You're bringing something abominable to...

First of all, you wouldn't get very far. You bring something like that into this, God's church, we're going to lay hands on you, and not in the way you think, in the biblical sense. You ain't bringing that in here. This is holy ground. You're going to bring in that abomination?

Again, there's a disconnect, there's a disenfranchising because ah, we would never do that.

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Really? I can tell you stories; you could probably tell me stories too about churches bringing into the church and, God forbid, into the pulpit the secular to mar the sacred. That's what they were doing. They were marring, nay even polluting the Temple of God.

And *verse 31*, **“And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom [we'll come back to that in a moment] to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into My heart.”**

God, never accepted human sacrifice; the pagan gods did. And they were sacrificing and burning alive their babies, their sons, their daughters?

Yeah.

“Therefore behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord, “when it will no more be called Tophet, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter for they will bury in Tophet until there is no room.”

This is...Wow! Bear with me; I'll try to explain this as best as I can with the help of the Holy Spirit, but for those of you that have been to Israel with us, or have been to Israel, outside the city walls of Jerusalem, there's this valley, very steep hill.

In fact, the busses will, you know, will go along side of the road. And down below is this valley. And in this valley at this time, they have this iron statue called Molech. And this iron statue had a hollow belly opened, and they would light a very hot fire that would burn in the belly of this iron statue of Molech in this valley.

And the arms of this statue were out like this. And these are the Israelites. They would bring their unwanted pregnancies, pre-abortion. Because of their sexual immorality they had unwanted pregnancies and babies.

So they would bring these babies, and they would put them on the arms of this burning hot iron statue of Molech there in the valley, and the baby would burn alive, and they would sacrifice the baby.

You know that expression, “fire in the belly”? That's where it comes from, the fire in the belly of this iron statue.

And they would play the drums really loud to cover up the cries of the babies.

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Again, I'm sorry, but this is as raw and as real as it really needs to be because it's the same thing today. It's not an iron statue or a fire in the belly. It's really a solution in the belly that kills the baby. And this was all under the banner of worshiping the god and goddesses of lust and sex and fertility and prosperity.

And God saying when the Babylonians, come the bodies, as we're going to read in verse 33, and the corpses are going to be stacked so high in this very valley that you have burned your children alive in.

You know, when I say that the prophetic parallels are chilling, this is why the prophetic parallels are chilling.

Verse 33, "The corpses of this people will be food for the birds of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth. And no one will frighten them away."

This would have been unthinkable, especially in that culture and even to this day, to not have a proper burial for the dead.

Verse 34, "Then I will cause to cease from the cities of Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride [all gone] for the land shall be desolate."

And this is exactly what would happen some 40 years after this, 40-plus years, exactly what would happen.

Well, last week I mentioned the same thing once again. I would love nothing more than to be able to end the chapter and with it the Bible study on a more perky note.

But I cannot. I cannot. The strength of this needs to be this strong because this is what's coming, not just to this nation but to this world. Judgment is coming. Judgment and destruction are coming. And here, we have this solemn and sober description of that which will come, and I'll even take it further and say it is sooner than any of us can possibly imagine. And in some ways, we're already beginning to taste from that cup the judgment of God, the judgment of God.

Well, Kapon, you want to come on up? Why don't you stand up. You okay? I tell you guys that the fact that you're here again this week, wow! I love you, man, I love you so much. I

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love your love for the Lord and the Word of the Lord, as hard as it is. Lord, thank You so much.

I mean, this is the truth. This is true, and we need to know this, we need to hear this, we need to take heed to this. Lord, we know judgment is coming. We want to snatch as many people out of the fire as we can before it's too late.

Lord, please, there are so many that are so lost. And how blessed are we and maybe how much we take it for granted that we know You, that You know us, that we're saved, that You're going to take us out of this.

But Lord, we want to take as many people with us as we can that can be spared from the judgment that's coming, Lord. This world is ripe for judgment, just as it was in Jeremiah's day. And Lord, as hard as it is and as difficult as this chapter was, Lord, it is so apropos for us in this world today.

So Lord, thank You for it. Thank You for it. We need to hear it. Now, You need to take it from here so that there is no disenfranchising or disconnecting ourselves from the application of this to our lives.

Lord, Thank You, in Jesus' name. Amen.