

Jeremiah 11:1-23
Don't Follow Your Heart
J.D. Farag

And tonight, Jeremiah, Chapter 11, and making our way through the Old Testament, and book-by-book and chapter-by-chapter and verse-by-verse.

And this book of Jeremiah is just, "Wow," right?

I can't think of another word. Just wow! Just wow!

So why don't we pray, and we'll ask God to bless our time together in His Word, if you would, please join with me.

Father in Heaven, thank You so much. Lord, we are just so grateful to You for Your Word, for this Bible study that we have here on Thursday nights.

We so look forward to it. For many of us, it is really that time of the week, really in the middle but towards the end of the week where we can just kind of regroup and calibrate ourselves and, for some sort of a reset and a reboot where we can just put everything aside and come to this beautiful place that You've given us and just have this time in Your Word where You are always faithful to speak into our lives, Lord.

You always have a word fitly spoken, and by the Holy Spirit, it is exactly what we need to hear at the exact time that we need to hear it. And it really doesn't matter where we're at in Your Word because Your Word is alive, and it's active and as sharper than any two-edged sword, and it's able to, with great supernatural precision, cut and divide between bone and marrow, soul and spirit.

So, Lord, we're fully anticipating that You're going to do that for us tonight in our time together in Your Word. And we thank You in advance for what You're going to do, in Jesus' name, amen and amen.

All right, so what we're about to see tonight in this chapter is what happens to us when we, like Judah, follow the dictates of our own evil hearts.

Doubtless you've heard this well-known saying, or perhaps even like me, you said it yourself. Oh, "just follow your heart." Don't do that.

Now, when we get to Jeremiah, Chapter 17, specifically verse 9; we're in Chapter 11 tonight. So by the time we get there, maybe the Rapture happens first. That'd be great if it did.

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But when we get to Chapter 17:9, what we're going to read is that our hearts are deceitfully wicked. Just those two words together right there: DECEITFULLY wicked.

I mean, our hearts are deceitful, but they're not just deceitful. They're deceitfully wicked, and they're so deceitfully wicked that we can't even know how deceitfully wicked our hearts are.

So that's Jeremiah 17:9. And I know that you know this verse. It's a familiar verse and for good reason because it does speak to how it is -

And again, as we're going to see tonight in this chapter, Chapter 11, how it is that the inclination of our hearts –

Now, let me just mention this word because we're going to see here in a moment and talk about it - Inclination, inclined. We're inclined. We have this proclivity, this propensity, this bent, if you prefer.

Let me use the illustration of a magnetic pull. There is like this magnetic pull in our hearts, that pull of our hearts to follow our hearts. And it goes contrary to following the Lord, obeying the Lord.

And when we do that, the results are always, without exception, catastrophic. And again, I know that you know exactly what I'm talking about.

So what's going to happen tonight and what we're going to see in this chapter actually is Jeremiah is going to speak to this. He's going to speak the truth to this.

This is what we read right out of the chute in Jeremiah Chapter 1 when God calls Jeremiah and says to Jeremiah, "I'm going to put My words on your mouth, and you're going to speak them, and by the way, Jeremiah, nobody's going to receive it."

In fact, they're going to hate your guts for it. In fact, not only are they going to hate your guts for it, they're going to want to kill you because of it. And we're going to see that tonight.

Actually, it's going to lead to a death threat on Jeremiah's life.

Why?

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Because he's speaking the truth, and they don't want to hear it. And so they want to silence him. It's a textbook case of: you don't like the message, so you kill the messenger.

You'll forgive the illustration. I know it's kind of a humorous one, but it is what it is.

Can you imagine that your mail delivery person shows up with a piece of mail, and you don't want that mail that that delivery person is delivering to you?

So you put a hit out on their life.

Again, I told you that was a... but you get the point, right?

Jeremiah's just the messenger. He's just the mouthpiece. He's just the voice. He's just the messenger delivering the message. And they're going to want to kill him because of it. So that's the introduction.

You ready? Let's jump in, verse 1.

"The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, [Verse 2] "Hear the words of this covenant, and speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God of Israel: "Cursed is the man who does not obey the words of this covenant which I commanded your fathers in the day I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, 'Obey My voice, and do according to all that I command you; so shall you be My people, and I will be your God,' that [Verse 5] I may establish the oath which I have sworn to your fathers, to give them 'a land flowing with milk and honey,' as it is this day." (Gasping) [Whoa, that was a lot!] [Let me catch my breath]

"And [Jeremiah] I answered and said, 'So be it, Lord.'"

Okay, we're off to a horrible start, right?

So first thing I want to point out, very important, we talked about this last week. This was spoken. This was not a letter written. This was a prophecy and a message that was spoken.

And it was now, instead of being at the gates to the entrance of the temple, this is in Jerusalem, throughout Judah, in the streets, in the hearing of the people, Jeremiah is to speak this to them.

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And I like Jeremiah's response: Okay, Lord, so be it; so be it, Lord.

By the way, you know that's what the word "amen" means?

I mean, we like that word, "amen."

Okay, listen, they have clinical terms. I get very distracted, so please help me out on this, okay?

Please, it's just that the amens will throw me off. I'll just end up closing in prayer. That's how distracted I get.

So okay, when we say "amen," what we're saying is, "So be it, Lord." So be it. So be it.

Now I mean, man, you got to hand it to Jeremiah. He's going to speak this, and oh, he's got to tell them that a curse is going to come upon them due to, as we're going to see now, their disobedience. You disobeyed Me.

This is the one thing that we can give God that He doesn't already have: Obedience.

Think about that for a moment. What's the one thing - I mean, this is God we're talking about, right?

Omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent; I mean, he has everything. He's all-powerful, He's all-present, He's all-knowing. What are you going to give God that He doesn't already have?

Your obedience. That's the one thing we can give to God that He doesn't already have. That's why obedience is better than sacrifice.

And isn't it true that sometimes in our disobedience, we try to overcompensate by sacrificing? And they go hand-in-hand.

God says, Listen, I don't need sacrifices. I got "plenty sacrifices." What I really need is obedience. That is rare in supply, obedience. The one thing you can give God that He does not necessarily have is obedience.

And one more thing on this before we move on, very important again. The harder thing than being obedient is being disobedient. Let me expound on that.

Sometimes - and the commands of the Lord, John says, are not burdensome. James: We just got done reading in Chapter 3 in our study through James on Sunday mornings.

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The wisdom from above is easy to be entreated. It's reasonable, it's not this heavy trip that's laid on you.

Jesus said, "**My burden is light, My yoke is easy. Come unto Me all ye that are weary, and I will give you rest for your souls.**"

"My burden is light; My yoke is easy."

"The commands of the Lord are not burdensome."

The only thing harder than obedience is disobedience. The path of the sinner, God's Word says, is hard. The path of the sinner is hard.

And one last thing. It is believed by some that when Jeremiah is now speaking, that which God commands him to speak to the people, that he's actually quoting from the Book of Deuteronomy. And it makes sense because what we're going to see in this chapter is right out of the Book of Deuteronomy.

Now, why do I point that out?

Because do you know what book Jesus quoted from, especially when He was tempted by the devil in the wilderness?

He quoted straight out of the Book of Deuteronomy.

For those of you that were with us during our study through Deuteronomy, What a book! Deu [*deuce, two*], ronomy [*the law*]. It's a repeat of the law.

And replete in the repeat of the law, Deuteronomy, you find these repeated commands, and it is so complete and so specific in some cases. And so some even believe that he had the scroll of Deuteronomy as he spoke this in the hearing of the people.

I only paint that picture because I want you to see this through that lens. This is a street preacher we're talking about here. This is a street prophet.

He's out there - Remember, we talked about this last week, on the riser, whatever; they didn't have egg crates or milk crates then.

But let's just say they did, so he's on a milk crate, and he's standing there, and he's preaching and prophesying this exact message.

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And just picture him possibly with the scroll of Deuteronomy as he's pronouncing and declaring that which God has commanded Him to speak in the hearing of the people.

Verse 6, "Then the Lord said to me, "Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying: 'Hear the words of this covenant and do them.'"

Oh, that sounds familiar, doesn't it?

"Don't be just a hearer of God's word, [merely a hearer of God's Word] but a doer."

[Don't just hear the words. Do them]

"For I [Verse 7] earnestly exhorted your fathers in the day I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, until this day, rising early and exhorting, saying, "Obey My voice.'"

Well, that's quite a picture. It's like, God, not that He sleeps, but just sort of metaphorically He's saying, I get up early in the morning to exhort you to obey Me.

I set My alarm clock; *God doesn't have an alarm clock, I'm just saying.* I rise up early in the morning to exhort you and say to you, Obey My voice.

Now, this is the second time He's brought up their fathers, whom He brought up out of the land of Egypt. And this was the covenant that He made with them.

"Yet [Verse 8] [And here it is, and we're going to spend some time on this, if you don't mind] they did not obey [And here's that word] or incline their ear, but everyone followed the dictates of his evil heart."

[Now what's God going to do?]

"Therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, [It's a covenant, after all, not a contract] [a covenant, unbreakable covenant] which I commanded them to do, but which they have not done."

Okay, bear with me. Because to me, this is far and away the takeaway from this chapter, as far as I'm concerned, because it is speaking very clearly to following of the Lord and obedience to the Lord, and not following our own hearts.

Now, did you see the way that Jeremiah's inspired by the Holy Spirit and commanded by God to speak this?

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So he starts out first by saying this is what you did and did not do. You did not obey or incline your ear. But then he also says this is why you didn't do it.

This is a textbook case of the "why" behind the "what."

What's the "what"?

The "what" is they did not obey. They did not incline their ear. It was not their inclination. They had no inclination to incline their ear to hear and obey the Word of God.

That's "what."

Well, "why"?

Oh, because you weren't following the Lord because you were following your own heart. You can't do both. It's one or the other.

If *Matthew Chapter 6* in that famous sermon that Jesus preached, we affectionately refer to it as the Sermon on the Mount, when Jesus said, "**You cannot serve two masters,**" He does not say "You should not," "It would be a pretty good idea if you did not," "I would highly recommend."

No, "**You cannot.**" It's either one or the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon.

You're either going to serve the one and hate the other, or vice versa, but it cannot be both. It's either/or.

So either I'm following my own heart or I'm following the Lord and inclining my ear to hear and obey the Word of God.

But see, if I am dull of hearing - We talked about this last week. We'll see it again, obviously, but dull-hearted, dull of hearing. Their ears are stopped.

And by the way, this is not a thing of well, I didn't really know.

No, no, you knew. This is a deliberate, decisive disobedience on their part.

And lest we come down too hard on them, we would do well, all of us, myself included, to really allow the Holy Spirit to search our own hearts concerning this.

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Because again, there's this really strong magnetic pull, and the metal shavings of our flesh are all too inclined to be attracted to that pull, the pull of our heart because our heart dictates.

"Dictates": That's an interesting word, isn't it?

Isn't that the word where we get "dictator"?

Does that put it into perspective?

Why do I point that out?

Because everyone followed the dictates. Their heart, their evil heart that's deceitfully wicked dictated, was the dictator, dictated what they did. They were following whatever the dictation.

Am I taking it too far?

You'll never see that word the same again. This is a dictatorship.

Oh, really? Who's the dictator?

Oh, my own heart is dictating to me.

And what do I do? I follow the dictates of my evil heart.

See, the problem is there's a covenant here, and it cannot be broken.

By the way, I don't want to get into the whole marriage thing. Maybe that's another topic for another time, but marriage is a covenant, an unbreakable covenant. It's not a contract; it's a covenant, huge difference. They're not synonymous in terms.

And what God, through the Prophet Jeremiah, is declaring to them is you have broken the covenant. And this is what you've done to break the covenant. And this is why you did it.

So what do I do about it?

Stop following that dictator, the dictatorship of your evil heart and incline your ear.

You know, I think about when Jesus said that, you know, the sheep know the shepherd's voice.

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And there are those for whom we all owe a great debt of gratitude to that have written about this, where the sheep can really detect a different voice because their ears, like a tuning fork, are tuned to that particular voice of that shepherd.

So let's say the shepherd calls in sick.

Again, you'll forgive my illustrations. These are all I got. If you got better ones, just let me know.

So the shepherd calls in sick one day.

We have to bring in the substitute shepherd, and the sheep are going, Who are you? I don't recognize that voice.

No, My sheep know My voice. It's that still, small voice of the Holy Spirit.

You know when the Lord is speaking to you, and I'm not talking audible, it doesn't have to be audible. The Lord will speak to you if we would but incline our ears to hear.

This is why throughout Scripture we read time and time again "**with ears to hear.**" Just because you have ears does not mean you hear.

Throughout the seven letters in *Revelation Chapters 2 and 3*, "**Let him who has an ear hear.**"

Again, you'll forgive the illustration, but I just picture - it's kind of like, you know, the rhetorical question. Raise your hand if you have an ear. Well, I've got two.

You ever wonder about that? You got two of them things.

You know what's really interesting and conspicuously absent from those things?

You don't have ear lids.

You have eye lids. Again, I know - That's a - but do you get the point?

We don't have - We don't need ear lids because we shut our ears without ear lids.

We don't - Am I taking it too far?

No?

Are we okay, you guys good?

Here's how it works. Last thing: we'll move on.

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Some of you are saying, please.

So I'll use this example. When I was a kid growing up, my mom, when she would yell at me, which was all the time and rightfully so, I deserved it. I was, oh... and she would say things to me like - Did your parents say this to you? You wait 'til you have children of your own.

You're like, Yeah, yeah, whatever.

Then you have your own children, and you're going, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. You're right; I had no - I'm so sorry - if I'd have known.

Anyway, back to my example.

So she would yell at me in that high-pitched voice. She was a soprano, by the way, and vocalist.

Oh, man, she could hit - I mean, the octave was - I don't know what - maybe Kapono knows, but I mean, this was - this was way up there, way up there.

And she would hit this one, this one key, this one octave that was so high-pitched. And she would say my name, and the way she would say it in that way, in that high pitch was, Wah-heee-doooooh!

Whatever it - I can't reach it. Again, maybe you can, Kapono.

But when she hit that, I heard nothing. All I heard was (Yelling in high-pitched Arabic voice)

I shut my ears.

I no longer heard - Oh's she's still speaking, really yelling at me. But I'm not listening to a word she says.

Okay, enough about me.

Let's talk about you now.

How about when you're in a conversation with somebody, and they're talking, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk. And you're not really listening.

In fact, you're thinking, I need to end this conversation because it's going on way too long.

And you're thinking, but you're courteous, and you've gotten good at it over the years.

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So you insert the "Hmm" at the right time, and "Is that right?" and "Oh, wow, that's interesting."

And then they'll ask you a question. You go, "Hmm," and then your busted, and they realize you weren't really listening.

"No, what'd you say?"

"What did you say?"

No, you weren't listening. Just because you have an ear, doesn't mean that you heard what I said.

"Let him who have an ear hear what the Spirit is saying to the church." And every single one of the seven letters ends the same exact way.

And even in the Old Testament: **"Hear, O Israel."** **"Hear, O Israel."**

Just because you have an ear doesn't mean you can hear.

So again, before we move on, here's the takeaway.

The reason why we don't follow the Lord, obey the Lord, incline our ears to the Lord is because we can't do both. We're following our heart, the dictates of our evil heart. Your heart will lead you without exception down the wrong road.

Why?

Because Chapter 17:9, your heart is deceitful. It's so deceitful and wicked that your heart can actually deceive you to where you believe your own lies.

Your heart's lying to you, by the way. When you go home tonight, you look at yourself in the mirror, you are looking at the biggest liar in your life, your heart. It is deceiving you; it is lying to you. It is deceitfully wicked.

So have a nice evening.

Let's move on to *verse 9*. **"And the Lord said to me, [Now this is interesting] 'A conspiracy has been found among the men of Judah and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They have turned back [Verse 10] to the iniquities of their forefathers who refused [And here it is**

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again] to hear My words, and they have gone after other gods to serve them. The house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken My covenant which I made with their fathers."

So again, here's the "why" behind the "what."

Why did they refuse? And by the way, refuse is deliberate, right?

That's a conscious refusal. It's deliberate. It's decisive.

You made the decision to refuse. I decline. I refuse to hear the words.

Why?

Oh, because I've gone after these other gods.

"Therefore [Verse 11] thus says the Lord: "Behold, I will surely bring calamity on them which they will not be able to escape. And though they cry out to Me, I will not listen to them.

Then the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will go and cry out to the gods to whom they offer incense, but they will not save them at all in the time of their trouble."

Now, this is kind of a difficult passage because there are many who are quick to start conversations like, "Well, that's not fair."

What do you mean? If they cry out to God, He's not going to listen to them?

No, you have to understand, and we're going to see this in a moment, they have deliberately rejected the Lord and they brought this on themselves.

And they're serving these other gods, and God's saying, You made your decision, your mind is made up, your heart is hardened, your fate is sealed. You've already made it very clear, and I'm not going to force Myself on you.

Look, you don't want to worship Me. You want to worship these other gods. I can't force you to worship Me. I don't want your worship if I have to force you to worship Me.

Think of it like a parent. I always try to bring it into the context and frame it in the family dynamics between a father and a child, as a father myself, an earthly fallen father.

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If my children don't want to spend time with me, I'm not going to force them, and even if I did, what kind of... I mean, look at that; are we're done yet?

Let's talk about what we refer to as devotions and quiet time with the Lord, right?

Oh, man, I got to get up in the morning, and I got to spend some time in prayer.

Really, can you imagine what that must do to the heart of God?

It's like, no. It's a got-to not a get-to? You got to?

Don't bother. I don't want it to be like that. I want it to be what you want to do. That of your own volition, you desire to be with Me, you want to worship Me, you want to spend time with Me.

If it's like that, then - And we're going to see this on Sunday, Lord willing, by the way, It's a very difficult passage in James. We see it throughout Scripture where we're told that God is a jealous God.

Now, we're always, sadly, we frame it in terms of a fleshly, carnal jealousy. It's not like that. He wants fully devoted hearts.

This is *2 Chronicles 16:9* when the prophet says to King Asa, who blew it, man.

And by the way, Josiah, who was king at the time, a good king of Judah; there were only nine, by the way, in Judah, Southern Judah. In Northern Israel, the Northern Tribes, not one good king. Every king in Northern Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord.

In Judah, they only had nine good kings, and Josiah was one of them. But eight of the nine kings blew it and messed up. I mean, they started out great.

This King Josiah, it's going to come up at the end of the chapter. We'll try to get there as quick as we can. I don't want to rush through this though. I think the Lord has something for us here.

But this King Josiah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, very pleasing to God. He was a good king, and he was the king at the time that Jeremiah was the prophet and prophesying.

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But what Josiah did was he tore down all of these idols that the Israelites, God's people in Judah were worshiping.

All of the Baals; he was tearing them down and burning them up. And that didn't sit too well with some that we're going to be introduced to here at the end of the chapter because they were making a lot of money off of these things.

And here comes Josiah, and he tears them down, and here comes the prophet Jeremiah preaching his doom and gloom.

Actually, we're going to see that word here. I love it. I underlined it in my Bible, so there.

But here's this prophet preaching doom and gloom. We got this king that's tearing down all these idols. You just basically cut our income not just in half, but you've basically taken away our livelihood, and that's not okay.

And that's actually one of the reasons why they want to kill Jeremiah.

Well, God's saying, listen, you've already made your choice. You want to worship these gods. You're offering incense to these gods.

Well, why don't you go to your gods then, in your time of trouble? Why are you coming to Me? You're worshiping them and coming to Me? No, it doesn't work like that.

"For according [Verse 13] to the number of your cities were your gods, O Judah [That's a lot of gods]. And according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem you have set up altars to that shameful thing."

I don't want to know. That's enough information for me. Well, I don't know what that is, but there are some commentators that make some suggestions, and really, that's TMI for me. Shameful, abhorrent, unthinkable, unspeakable **"altars to burn incense to Baal."**

So [Verse 14] do not pray for this people or lift up a cry or prayer for them for I will not hear them in the time that they cry out to Me because of their trouble."

Does this sound familiar?

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It should, because we just read this before where God basically says to Jeremiah, Stop praying for them, don't waste your breath because I'm not going to listen or answer their prayer.

They've already made up their minds, and they've already hardened their hearts. They've already made their decision. They've already decided to serve these other gods. So stop praying for them.

And I'm not going to get in-depth into it. We spent quite a bit of time on it last time. But there does come a time when God will release you from praying for someone.

And this could be for a number of reasons. Sometimes it's because God will not listen. It's already too late. They've already sealed their fate.

Now, *verse 15*, we turn this very interesting corner of sorts. Listen to the verbiage, the way God has Jeremiah say this. **"What has My beloved to do in My house?"**

Ooh, that hurts. Because you know what that's saying?

You're My beloved. I love you; I still love you. But apparently, you don't love Me.

"Having done lewd deeds with many?"

(Sighing)

Think about it as a husband. This is your beloved; this is your wife. And she's done lewd deeds with many?

"And the holy flesh has passed from you."

And listen to this. **"When you do evil, then you rejoice."**

Wait. What?

So my beloved has done lewd deeds with many. I don't want to know any more about that. That's enough; it's already TMI. And the holy flesh has passed from you.

You have done evil, and not only have you done evil, that's bad enough on its face, but you do the evil, then you rejoice in the evil you did. You're boasting in it. You're rejoicing in it. You're posting it on social media.

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Does that help bring it into to the - That's what they were doing. They were actually proud of the evil that they were doing. They were rejoicing in the evil they were doing.

"The Lord [Verse 16] called your name, Green Olive Tree, Lovely and of Good Fruit."

The endearing names - the name is the nature. And you know, it's - Picture it like this.

You know, my wife and I when we were first married, we had those cute names we called each other. I'm not going to tell you what they were. Very sappy, right, you know?

Well, the most common ones are oh, you know, "cupcake," or "sweetie pie," or "pumpkin."

Pumpkin is...anyway, I never called my wife pumpkin. Nothing against pumpkins, it just didn't quite fit. I had other names.

Again, I'm not telling you. No matter what you try to do, you're not getting it out of me.

But it's just we had these pet names.

These were - it was - I remember. I'm in the office. This is a long time ago in a land far, far away. I'm very professional, you know, wearing my suit.

Yes, that will be fine, we'll go ahead and confirm that about... Excuse me, can you just hold for a minute? I have another call on line 2. It's my wife.

I push line 2.

Hi, hi, honey. (Babbling in lovey-dovey talk)

Completely changed. Not even know it's the same person. We had our own language. I'm calling her all these, you know, cute, adorable names. Now, I'm not telling you what the names are.

That's what the Lord's saying here.

Remember when we used to talk like that? "Green olive tree," "lovely," "good fruit," "sweetie pie."

"With the noise of a great tumult He has kindled fire on it, and its branches are broken. For the Lord of hosts, [Verse 17] who planted you, has pronounced [here's that word] doom against you for the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, [and I want you to

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pay particular attention to what it says here at the end of verse 17] **which they have done against themselves."**

Did you catch that?

They brought this on themselves. They have no one but themselves to blame.

Oh, they'll try to blame. We're always pointing the finger of blame at everyone and everything but ourselves.

"Which they have done against themselves to provoke Me to anger in offering incense to Baal."

You know, I tried, I spent some time today, I don't really have an example, a comparison modern-day to what this would be like.

I mean, when we read verses like this about how, these are God's people now, burning and offering incense to Baal, I'm hard pressed to come up with a comparison modern-day, an example of what this would be akin to for us as believers. But it would be an absolute affront to a holy God.

"Now [Verse 18] the Lord gave me knowledge of it, and I know it, for You showed me their doings. [What doings, Jeremiah?] [Oh, here I am, verse 19.] "I was like a docile lamb brought to the slaughter, and I did not know that they had devised schemes against me, saying, 'Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name be remembered no more.'"

This is the plot now. This is the death threat on his life. Why?

Because he's speaking the truth. We need to silence this guy. We don't want to listen to this guy.

And now listen to his prayer, *verse 20*; he cries out to the Lord. **"But, O Lord of hosts, You who judge righteously, testing the mind and the heart, let me see Your vengeance on them, for to You I have revealed my cause."**

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Therefore [Verse 21] thus says the Lord concerning the men of Anathoth [*Hang on to that, I want to come back to that*] who seek your life, saying, 'Do not prophesy in the name of the Lord, lest you die by our hand.'"

Translated: You keep speaking this, and we're going to kill you. You better stop. Stop or we're going to kill you. We'll stop you. We'll silence you.

Who?

The men of Anathoth?

Who are they?

Oh, these are Jeremiah's homies. This is his hometown. That's where he's from.

Isn't that interesting?

I mean, we know that a prophet is without honor in his hometown, as Jesus would say, when He could do very few miracles in Nazareth, where He was from. But these are - men of Anathoth? That's where Jeremiah is from.

Can you just even wrap your mind around how evil it must have been?

Because these men of Anathoth were the priests. These were the priests, the pastors. And they want to kill one of their own. The priests want to kill the prophet. That's how bad it was.

And for Jeremiah to ask the Lord to mete out vengeance because vengeance belongs to the Lord, you can understand it.

Can you imagine?

I mean, we've already seen that Jeremiah is a very sensitive man, the Weeping Prophet. We just read in the last chapter, Chapter 10, that he wept. The very first part of Chapter 10, he had no more tears to cry. He had cried so much.

Have you ever cried that much?

Where there's no more tears, the tear ducts are completely empty?

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That's how much he wept. He was so heartbroken. Imagine how much this must have hurt him.

Jeremiah was a very sensitive, soft-hearted man. And these are his brethren from his hometown. He grew up with them. They played together as kids, had barbecues together as they got older.

And now they want to kill him. And it's not just that they want to kill him, it's why they want to kill him. Because they want him to stop prophesying in the name of the Lord.

"Therefore [Verse 22] thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Behold, I will punish them. The young men shall die by the sword, their sons and their daughters shall die by famine.

And [Verse 23] there shall be no remnant of them, for I will bring catastrophe on the men of Anathoth, even the year of their punishment.'"

Before we partake together of communion, I think I would be grossly remiss if I didn't, at the very least, mention that what Jeremiah does here is the right thing.

And I think it's a good model for us when there are those, like with Jeremiah, who attack us, want to hurt us, want to silence us from our own.

There is absolutely nothing wrong. I mean, we stop at **"Vengeance belongs to the Lord."**

And sometimes it's not very easy to do because everything within our sin nature, our human nature we want to mete out our own vengeance.

Because just I mean, you know, again, talk about Deuteronomy. **"An eye for an eye. Tooth for a tooth."**

You know what that really means?

If someone takes your eye, it's just one eye. Don't take two eyes.

Because we don't want to just, you know, one eye for one eye, or one tooth - I want to knock out all their teeth. That's what that means. In our vengeance, we want to actually go above and beyond what they did to us when we mete out vengeance.

But vengeance belongs to the Lord.

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Now, don't stop there because as we just read, as God responds to Jeremiah, who lets God take vengeance on them rightfully and just-fully so, God says I will.

Okay, vengeance belongs to the Lord. Now leave it with the Lord because He will mete out the vengeance. And it will always be righteous and just.

Left to ourselves it's vengeance on steroids. You took my tooth. I don't want just all your teeth. I want your family's teeth. I want your uncle's and auntie's teeth. I'm taking them all.

An eye for an eye. A tooth for a tooth.

No, let God, let God, "let," keyword, let God. Let God do it. He will do it right. It will be just. Your hands will remain clean. Vengeance belongs to the Lord.

One last thing. No man can touch you or take your life until God's through with you. God's not through with Jeremiah. We're only at Chapter 11.

See, now, if Jeremiah had all the 52 chapters - they haven't been written yet - he would say, You want to kill me?

Well, you're going to have to wait because we're only at 11, so you can't - I'm not - God's still got - there's a lot of chapters left. So I hope you're patient in wanting to take my life.

What's the point?

The point is, is that the days of your life are in the hands of the Lord. And you have nothing to fear. I will not fear what man can do unto me.

Jesus said it like this, very powerful, actually. "**Don't fear man who can kill the body. Fear God who can kill the body and send the soul to hell.**" That's who you fear.

No, man, you want to kill me? Oh, there's a conspiracy to kill me? You're already plotting. You're trying to figure out where's he going to be on Tuesday?

Well, he'll probably be back on that milk carton because they had milk cartons back then, preaching in the streets. So that's when we'll kill him.

Okay, go ahead and try. No, you're not.

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And oh, by the way, this guy that you want to kill, he prayed to Me. I heard his prayer. This is My guy; this is a man of God. This is God's man. This is God's prophet. This is God's servant. And you want to kill him?

Go ahead, try. You ain't going to touch him. You ain't going to touch him. I have angels encamped round about him.

I'm not through with - In other words, we're not going anywhere until the time comes, not one second sooner, not one second later. Because the day of our death is in the hands of the Lord.

Not in Chapter 11, you're not. We can talk about this in Chapter 52 if you want, but not right now.

Well, that's how I want to end and transition into our communion celebration.

I look forward to communion. I always like to try to leave as much time as possible so we're not rushing through it. We affectionately refer to it as The Last Supper.

It's recorded in *Luke's Gospel, the 22nd Chapter*, beginning in *verse 14*, where Luke, by the Holy Spirit, writes, "**When the hour had come, He [Speaking of Jesus] sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him.**

Then He said to them, 'With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; [Speaking of the crucifixion] for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.'

Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, 'Take this and divide it among yourselves. For I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God comes.'"

It's the second time now that He's expressed, I would imagine very passionately, by the way, maybe even very emotionally, if I can say it like that.

Twice He says to them, You guys, what we're doing here tonight, this is the last time I'm going to do this with you. The next time, and I can't wait, "fervently desire." Some of your translations render it "eagerly await."

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I can't wait until what we're doing here tonight finds its ultimate fulfillment in the Kingdom of God. So the next time, oh, can't wait!

"And He took bread, gave thanks, and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.'"

If you'll take the packaging and just peel back the top part, for those of you that are here; those of you online, just if you'll take the bread and hold on to it for a moment.

So grateful to You, Lord, that You gave us this ordinance as a symbol, as a remembrance, because we forget, Lord. We forget; we get so caught up in the busyness and the stress and the pressures of life, especially in this world that we're living in.

And every time we partake and as often as we do in remembrance of You, it serves as that much-needed reminder of what You did for us, that You died for us, that Your body was broken for us because of Your incomprehensible love for us to purchase us, to redeem us, to save us.

So when the time comes, and You come, and You take us out of here to that place that You prepared for us in Your Father's house, and we celebrate and commemorate our marriage to You as our bridegroom, and then after the seven is completed, we emerge from that bridal chamber that You built and prepared, we're going to have a wedding feast as Your bride by Your side.

And that's what You're referring to, Lord. That the next time will be when we're with You in Your kingdom partaking with You.

That's too high for our understanding. But for now, Lord, thank You for giving us this to do because it points us back to You, it reminds us of You, and what we have to look forward to.

And knowing that we have this to look forward to makes whatever we're going through, and I know so many are going through such difficult and hardship and painful trials, but this makes getting through that easier to get through, knowing that what we're celebrating tonight is what we have to look forward to when it's fulfilled in Your kingdom.

Lord, thank You for Your body broken for us.

Would you partake with me?

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Thank You, Lord. Luke goes on to write, and he says, "**Likewise, He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood which is shed for you.'**"

So again, for those of you that are here, if you'll peel back the remainder of the packaging, and those online, if you just get the cup and hold on to it for a moment again.

You know, culturally in that day, and it's still the same today, modern-day in the Middle East, it's sad because we really miss it in our culture today, but everything is centered around food.

And you always eat from the same bread, you drink from the same cup because it is a common union, communion.

And the thought in the Middle East and especially in the Arab culture is that same bread that's in you is in me. It's from the same bread.

I remember as a kid growing up I would watch my dad with my uncles when they would eat. They would, first of all, they would eat with their hands. So barbaric and uncivilized, but it didn't matter.

And they would take the unleavened bread, pita bread, you know? I hope you had dinner because it's going to make you hungry now.

And they would break it, and they would give the broken bread to the next guy. He would break a piece, they would pass it around. They all ate from the same bread because that's the point. The same bread that's in you is the same bread that's in me.

And they would take their bread and then usually dip it in the hummus (kissing sound) with the garlic, lots of garlic, or the baba ghanoush, and they would dip it, and they would eat together and break bread together.

And then they would double-dip. It didn't matter because the same germs that are in you are the same germs that are in me because we're one. We're one; it doesn't matter. And then the cup: one cup.

They would drink from the cup and pass it - I'll never forget this. In fact, at weddings: I'm going to take it one step further, if you don't mind, just real quick.

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I'll never forget; I remember asking my mom. I was horrified.

They had this huge - and they prepared for weeks - this huge wedding feast.

Ah, wedding feast.

Big mound of rice. You've never tasted rice.

Listen, I mean no disrespect to the local culture. I love rice, especially spicy ahi poke. But you haven't had rice 'till you had this rice. It's a big mound of rice.

Where's the plate?

No plates.

Where's the utensils?

No utensils.

Where's the napkin?

No need.

You know what they would do?

They would take their hands, they would shove it into this mound of rice, take out some rice, make a little ball, start eating it. And they would all do that. Same rice, no forks, no chopsticks even, hands.

Why?

Common union. We're one. It doesn't matter. We eat from the same bread; we drink from the same cup. And we miss that in our culture.

So as you partake together of the cup, which is the cup of the New Covenant in His blood that was shed in our stead, for the remission of our sins. That is what this symbolizes, is the blood of Jesus Christ.

Would you partake with me?

And then please stand, and then Kapono, if you would please come up?

Father in heaven, thank You, thank You, thank You so much, Lord.

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(Sighing)

Thank You for giving us this to do in remembrance of You. Thank You for Your body broken, Your blood shed.

Thank You for going to the cross and paying the price. Thank You for the remission of all of our sin, removing it as far as these East is from the West and remembering it no more though our sins be as scarlet, because of Your shed blood.

Lord, how is it possible that we can ever thank You enough?

I suppose our only consolation is that we'll have all of eternity to praise You and thank You and worship You.

But for now, we say, thank You, Jesus, and we praise You, Jesus. And we give You all the glory, Jesus, for what You did for us because of Your love for us.

We love You so much, Jesus. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.