

Jeremiah 5 - Is There One?

God tells Jeremiah to run to and fro, seeking just one who executes true judgment. But there was not one. As we look at where Judah was spiritually, we can see many similarities in our own nation. The call remains the same: "Repent!"

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Jeremiah 5:1 — ""Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem; See now and know; And seek in her open places If you can find a man, If there is anyone who executes judgment, Who seeks the truth, And I will pardon her."

Having just spoken of judgment to come in the last chapter, God now challenges His people, and specifically His servant Jeremiah, to **run to and fro**, a phrase commonly used in the Bible to indicate a thorough search. He was to look high and low, far and wide, looking for **anyone who executes justice**. God promises that He would pardon if Jeremiah could find but one.

2 Chronicles 16:9 - "For the eyes of the LORD **run to and fro** throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars."

While quite picturesque of the absolutely degraded spiritual state of Judah, it doesn't mean there wasn't a single believer. God always has a remnant, but when the prevailing actions and state of the nation is such as it was in this time, we see that God knows how to deliver His remnant out of it and save them from destruction while the rest must face it head on.

1 Kings 19:1-18

Luke 18:6-8 — "Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. "And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? "I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

Look at Sodom and Gomorrah - God delivered Lot before the destruction came.

Genesis 18:22-33

2 Peter 2:4-11(9)

Jeremiah 5:2 — "Though they say, 'As the LORD lives,' Surely they swear falsely.'"

There isn't anything special about just saying the words. You can say anything you want, that doesn't give it power. A common thing is for people to tack on "In Jesus' Name" at the end of things, whether or not it actually fits. It's one thing to pray for the salvation of a lost soul "in Jesus' Name" and it is a totally different thing to say that a million dollars is going to manifest itself in the tithe box "in Jesus' Name." Only one of those things are, without a doubt, asked for in His name.

They would swear and make promises in a similar way by tacking on "**As the Lord lives**" but they wouldn't live for Him nor did they truly believe that He lives, or they wouldn't have been doing the things they were.

As Christians, we are commanded not to swear, but rather to keep our word.

James 5:12 — "But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your "Yes" be "Yes," and your "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment."

Unfortunately, there is much of the “church” that could fit this description. There always has been. The “church” has always had a mixed multitude - a blend of true, committed believers, carnal Christians, and false converts. It becomes quite obvious when we look at God’s Word and see what His standard is. We fall short. But even moreso, the “church” fits this description given in Jeremiah. How sad it is that we are tasked to find “anyone.” We have a great Church here in the Lower Valley - many true, committed believers in fellowship. But in general, these *pockets* of Christians are small compared to the nation.

As a whole, America has rejected the Lord. We have removed Him from our government, then we removed Him from our schools and replaced Him with the government. Now we see the fruits of that. More and more rejection of Christ, turning further away from Him and turning to Humanism.

God wants us all. He is not willing that any should perish-

2 Peter 3:9 - The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 - For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

So while there is a faithful remnant, and we are so blessed to be surrounded by a relatively large number of this remnant, the majority must still be corrected. God doesn’t give up on them. Just as in Judah’s time there was always a window for repentance, still there is today! In all the world, in every nation, regardless of the government or ruling forces, there is always a window to repent and turn to God.

Jeremiah 5:3 — "O LORD, are not Your eyes on the truth? You have stricken them, But they have not grieved; You have consumed them, But they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; They have refused to return."

In many cases, we see that God will try to get His people to turn back by a progressive system of discipline or chastening. Deuteronomy 28 records a list of judgments that would come on Israel if they would refuse to repent - starting with small and increasing over time to utter destruction of the land and removal from it (exile/slavery).

God won’t look on sin with pleasure, He can’t. See what Habakkuk says:

Habakkuk 1:13 - You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness. Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, And hold Your tongue when the wicked devours A person more righteous than he?

When God’s children are sinning, He chastises them. An example of what parenting is at times, God sets forth a system of discipline to teach and instruct His people. Hebrews 12 has more on this. If we would just repent, turn to God, He would welcome us with open arms.

God and Jeremiah’s conversation continues:

Jeremiah 5:4-5 — "Therefore I said, “Surely these are poor. They are foolish; For they do not know the way of the LORD, The judgment of their God. I will go to the great men and speak to them, For they have known the way of the LORD, The judgment of their God.” But these have altogether broken the yoke And burst the bonds."

Many take this to be Jeremiah speaking, but it could be God speaking to. Either way, they thought that perhaps this apostasy is just among the poor and uneducated. That it was just because they weren’t wise or noble-minded and that’s why they weren’t repenting. So they sought out a righteous one, they looked for someone who executed true justice and found none. Instead they found that wise, the noble, the leaders were

setting free those criminals who were supposed to be in jail. They were telling the people that all was okay, that they didn't have to worry about God's law or His judgments, that the people were free to do as they pleased.

Can you imagine? Having a set of rules and laws that would condemn a criminal to prison for their crimes, and then having a leader just set them free? That would be crazy! Okay, forgive the sarcasm, but does this not happen today?? It is hard not to see the modern world in this.

God is still searching for someone, anyone, who will stand in truth against corrupt leaders and a corrupt populus.

Ezekiel 22:23-31

Jeremiah 5:6 — "Therefore a lion from the forest shall slay them, A wolf of the deserts shall destroy them; A leopard will watch over their cities. Everyone who goes out from there shall be torn in pieces, Because their transgressions are many; Their backslidings have increased."

"The lion represents strength, the desert wolf ravenousness, and the leopard swiftness — all traits of the Babylonians." (Feinberg)

Jeremiah 5:7-8 — "'How shall I pardon you for this? Your children have forsaken Me And sworn by those that are not gods. When I had fed them to the full, Then they committed adultery And assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. They were like well-fed lusty stallions; Every one neighed after his neighbor's wife."

Ezekiel 16:48–50 - "As I live," says the Lord GOD, "neither your sister Sodom nor her daughters have done as you and your daughters have done. "Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. "And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit.

Jeremiah 5:9 — "Shall I not punish them for these things?" says the LORD. "And shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?"

A rhetorical question. But one that some people have a hard time with. Justice is hard.

Cf. 5:29, 9:9

Jeremiah 5:10-11 — "'Go up on her walls and destroy, But do not make a complete end. Take away her branches, For they are not the LORD's. For the house of Israel and the house of Judah Have dealt very treacherously with Me," says the LORD."

In all this though, God's grace and mercy are shown in that He will not allow His people to be completely destroyed. He made a promise to Adam, He made a promise to Abraham, and He made a promise to David. The Messiah would come through Israel.

God had to judge His people, He had to cleanse them to make way for Messiah to come through them.

Jeremiah 5:12-13 — "They have lied about the LORD, And said, "It is not He. Neither will evil come upon us, Nor shall we see sword or famine. And the prophets become wind, For the word is not in them. Thus shall it be done to them."

Too many times we mistake God's patience for approval. They're reasoning is that, since God hasn't done all that the prophets threaten, He won't do anything. Remember that verse from 2 Peter:

2 Peter 3:9 - The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

God isn't approving of their actions, He is just giving them time to repent before judgment comes.

Jeremiah 5:14 — "Therefore thus says the LORD God of hosts: "Because you speak this word, Behold, I will make My words in your mouth fire, And this people wood, And it shall devour them."

Because they were mistaking God's patience as approval, God says now His word will go forth as a fire to consume them. Fire cleanses and purges anything that can't withstand the heat. Like the testing of gold and silver to purify them.

Jeremiah 5:15-17 — "Behold, I will bring a nation against you from afar, O house of Israel," says the LORD. "It is a mighty nation, It is an ancient nation, A nation whose language you do not know, Nor can you understand what they say. Their quiver is like an open tomb; They are all mighty men. And they shall eat up your harvest and your bread, Which your sons and daughters should eat. They shall eat up your flocks and your herds; They shall eat up your vines and your fig trees; They shall destroy your fortified cities, In which you trust, with the sword."

Babylon would come for judgment. The terrifying scene is here described.

Jeremiah 5:18 — ""Nevertheless in those days," says the LORD, "I will not make a complete end of you."

God's grace is on display! His mercy that is unending is here shown to His people.

Jeremiah 5:19 — ""And it will be when you say, 'Why does the LORD our God do all these things to us?' then you shall answer them, 'Just as you have forsaken Me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve aliens in a land that is not yours.'"

Proper discipline is not without instruction. God explains to His people why they are being punished and how the punishment is fitting.

Jeremiah 5:20-23 — ""Declare this in the house of Jacob And proclaim it in Judah, saying, 'Hear this now, O foolish people, Without understanding, Who have eyes and see not, And who have ears and hear not: Do you not fear Me?' says the LORD. 'Will you not tremble at My presence, Who have placed the sand as the bound of the sea, By a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass beyond it? And though its waves toss to and fro, Yet they cannot prevail; Though they roar, yet they cannot pass over it. But this people has a defiant and rebellious heart; They have revolted and departed.'"

Frequently in the Old Testament, this phrase was used (eyes/see not, ears/hear not). It just puts all the more emphasis on Jesus' words in the Gospels and in Revelation: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Jeremiah 5:24-25 — "They do not say in their heart, "Let us now fear the LORD our God, Who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season. He reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest." Your iniquities have turned these things away, And your sins have withheld good from you."

Jeremiah 5:26-28 — ""For among My people are found wicked men; They lie in wait as one who sets snares; They set a trap; They catch men. As a cage is full of birds, So their houses are full of deceit. Therefore they have become great and grown rich. They have grown fat, they are sleek; Yes, they surpass the deeds of the wicked; They do not plead the cause, The cause of the fatherless; Yet they prosper, And the right of the needy they do not defend."

Jeremiah 5:29 — "Shall I not punish them for these things?' says the LORD. 'Shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?'"

Cf. 5:9, 9:9

Jeremiah 5:30-31 — "“An astonishing and horrible thing Has been committed in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule by their own power; And My people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end?"

2 Timothy 4:3 — "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;"