

(Through the Bible) Jeremiah 16-20

by Chuck Smith

Jeremiah's sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting in the Lord and avoiding the deceitfulness of the human heart, as God's judgment is coming upon Israel.

Duration: 1:07:08

Scripture: Jeremiah 2:13-16

Topics: "God's Sovereignty", "Spiritual Obedience"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher uses the analogy of a potter working with clay to illustrate God's dealings with mankind. The potter represents God, who has complete control over our lives and can shape us according to His will. The wheel symbolizes the circumstances of our lives through which God molds and shapes us. The preacher also discusses how Satan can easily rob us of our joy in the Lord and how important it is to focus on God's goodness and blessings. Additionally, the sermon touches on the consequences of forsaking God and walking after other gods, emphasizing the need to obey God's law.

Transcript

Shall we turn now to Jeremiah 16. Now you remember that Jeremiah was just a young man when God called him to this prophetic ministry. And so in chapter 16, the word of the Lord came unto me saying, Thou shalt not take a wife, neither shalt thou have sons or daughters in this place.

So Jeremiah is commanded by God not to marry. And the reason for the commandment not to marry or not to have children was to be a sign to the people of the terrible times that were coming. They were going to really be facing hard times.

And it was no time to be having children because if you have children, they're going to die of starvation. They're going to be killed in the siege. It's just not a time to be having children or to be getting married.

And also it was to be a sign, his bachelorhood was to be a sign unto the people. Now it is interesting that God spoke to Hosea and told him to marry. And God directed him concerning his marriage.

And with Hosea, his marriage was to be a sign unto the people. With Isaiah, he was to name his children as signs to the people. And so their names meant certain things that were again assigned to the people.

So with Jeremiah, God called him to bachelorhood. For thus saith the Lord concerning the sons and the daughters that are born in this place, concerning their mothers that bear them, concerning the fathers that

begat them in this land, they shall die of grief, the deaths. They shall not be lamented.

Neither will they be buried, but they will be as dung upon the face of the earth and they shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine and their carcasses shall be meat for the fowls of heaven and for the beast of the earth. For thus saith the Lord, enter not into the house of mourning, neither go to lament nor bemoan them, for I have taken away my peace from this people, saith the Lord, even loving kindness and mercies. Both the great and the small shall die in this land.

They shall not be buried. Neither shall men lament for them, nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them. Now in Israel they have customs when a family member dies, you're not to shave for 30 days.

And then when you shave, you take the hair that has grown in that 30 days and offer it unto the Lord as sort of a sacrifice. But it was a sign, it is a sign of mourning. And even to the present day, the Jews observe this sign of mourning at a death.

So the shaving was after the 30 days that they had died. But he's saying there's not going to be any kind of a memorial or cutting of your shaving of yourself or whatever for those who have died. Neither shall men tear themselves for them in mourning.

And of course, these people sought to show their great love for the deceased. And the more wailing that went on in the house indicated to everybody how much you love them. So when someone died that was very close to you, you wanted everybody to know how deeply you love them.

And so you would hire wailers to come into your house. And there were professionals that could really wail. And they would come in and go through this wailing process.

And of course, you would join in with them. And there was this lamenting the wailing that they did for the dead. And so he's saying that that's not going to even be going on.

The tearing of themselves or this mourning to comfort them for the dead. Neither shall men give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or for their mother. So don't get married.

Don't have children because the people that are here, the children that are now being born are going to suffer fearful, awful deaths as their bodies won't even be buried. There'll be no one around to mourn their deaths. And he's just telling of the hard, hard times that are coming.

And because of that, as a sign to the people, he was not to marry nor to have children. Now the Lord gave him a second commandment in verse eight. Thou shalt not also go into the house of feasting to sit with them to eat and to drink.

Now, of course, the feast were great occasions and, um, it was really their, their, they didn't have television, radios and movie theaters. And so their entertainment was at these feasts and these feasts would be great occasions, not only of dining, but also of entertainment. And so there was great laughter as, as you had all kinds of entertainment during these feasts and all, and they were just times of, of entertainment and celebration.

But the prophet is told not to go to these feasts. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, behold, I will cause to cease out of this place in your eyes. And in your days, the voice of merriment and the voice

of gladness and the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride during your time, during this generation, these things are all going to cease in this land.

So as a sign to the people that the end has come, don't go into the house of feasting. Don't join in that merriment and it shall come to pass when thou shalt show this people all these words and they shall say unto thee, why has the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us? Or what is our iniquity? Or what is our sin that we have committed against the Lord, our God? Then shalt thou say unto them, because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the Lord, and have walked after other gods and have served them and have worshiped them and have forsaken me and not kept my law. But you have done worse than your fathers.

For behold, you walk everyone after the imagination of his evil heart that they may not hearken unto me. So there was anarchy. Everyone was following the imagination of his own evil heart.

God's law was forsaken and thus the judgments of God were coming upon them. Now, the Jew was immensely proud of his heritage. They were always talking about our fathers and Jesus brings out the fact how they are always saying, well, our fathers and in the days of our fathers.

So you remember when Stephen was called in before the Sanhedrin as he started to sort of rehearse for them their, what they felt, illustrious history. He got caught up as he was rehearsing their history with the whole hypocrisy of the thing for remembering their history. He remembered how they had treated the prophets of God.

Now here's Jeremiah and he's saying, hey, this is all happening to you because your fathers have forsaken God. They are worshiping these other gods, but you are even worse than your fathers. Everyone is doing after the imagination of his own wicked heart.

And for this cause, God is pronouncing this judgment that is coming. Now their reaction to Jeremiah was to put him in prison when he brought this message to them. So as Stephen is rehearsing to the Sanhedrin, who, you know, our fathers and you remember Jesus and talking with them, they said, they were kept talking about our fathers and Jesus said, look, if Abraham was your father, then you believe in me.

For Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he saw it. And they were arguing with Jesus about that. And they said, we have, you know, Abraham was our father.

Jesus said, you're of your father, the devil and his works are the works that you're doing. Well, Stephen got carried away and he said, which of the prophets have you not stoned? And he started really laying on them what their fathers had done, that they weren't these glorious illustrious kind of men of faith, that they had actually turned away from God and reminded them of that fact. Therefore, God said, will I cast you out of this land into a land that you know not neither ye nor your fathers, and there you will serve other gods day and night where I will not show you favor.

Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, the Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, but the Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from the lands, whether he had driven them, and I will bring them again into their land that I gave to their fathers. Now he's speaking about this dark period of history that they're facing. During your time, the land is going to be laid desolate.

During your time, you're going to be carried away captive because of your evil in turning against God. It's all going to happen in your time. And yet, though he is pronouncing this judgment, he goes ahead and speaks of that glorious day when God will gather them back again into the land.

After the 70-year captivity, the Lord will bring them back into the land, and the day will come when they'll say, the God who brought us out of our captivity, rather than the God who brought our fathers out of Egypt, they'll sign about God who brought us back from the captivity and put us back in the land. Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them. And after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.

For my eyes are upon all their ways, and they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from my eyes. And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double, because they have defiled my land, and they have filled mine inheritance with the carcasses of the detestable and abominable things. Jeremiah cried out in response to what God had said, O Lord, my strength and my fortress and my refuge in the day of affliction.

The Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit. Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they are no gods? Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know, and I will cause them to know mine hand and my might, and they shall know that my name is Jehovah. So Jeremiah cries out, it's almost as a psalm.

In fact, there are psalms, the Lord is my strength, my refuge, my fortress. And he is perhaps thinking of that psalm when he cries out, O Lord, my strength, my fortress, my refuge in the day of affliction. And then the prophecy of the Gentiles coming from the ends of the earth.

And Paul makes mention of the prophecies concerning the Gentile salvation in the book to the Romans. Chapter 17, the sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron and with a point of a diamond. Interesting that they were using diamonds for pens in those days, isn't it? Diamonds set in iron.

It is graven upon the table of their heart and upon the horns of your altars. Whilst their children remember their altars and their groves by the green trees and upon the high hills. O my mountains in the field, I will give thy substance and all thy treasures to the spoil and thy high places for sin throughout all thy borders.

And thou, even thyself shall discontinue from thine heritage that I gave thee, and I will cause thee to serve thine enemies in the land which thou knowest not. For ye have kindled a fire in my anger, which shall burn forever. Thus saith the Lord, cursed be the man that trust in man and makes flesh his arm and whose heart departs from the Lord.

And so God pronounces the curse upon those that would trust in an alliance in Egypt to deliver them from this Babylonian invasion. Cursed be the man who puts his trust in man and makes the flesh his arm who has departed from the Lord that is from trusting in the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert.

He shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in the salt land and not inhabited. In contrast to the cursed, be the man blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord and whose hope the Lord is or is the Lord. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters that spreads out her roots by the river and shall not see when the heat comes, but her leaves shall be green and shall not worry in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

So the cursing upon those that would trust in man in the arm of flesh and not the Lord, but the blessing upon those that would trust in the Lord. Those who trust in man and the arm of flesh will be dried, withered, dead, uninhabited. Those that trust in the Lord will be like a tree planted by the waters that doesn't even know when summer comes because of the freshness that it draws out from that water.

Now, verse nine, the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? God's talking about your heart and my heart. Socrates cried, man know thyself, but who really does know himself? The scripture says thou, O Lord, searches the heart and the reins.

God knows my heart better than I know it. God knows what deception is there, and it is easy for us to become deceived. It's easy for us to follow a vain philosophy.

It's easy for us to take that adage, the end justifies the means, and so our means become perverse, crooked. Paul the Apostle talks about those who say, well, our lies bring glory to God, so God shouldn't judge us for lying. Or those who would say, well, if I sin, I'm only proving that God is telling the truth when He said all have sinned, so how can God judge me for proving Him to be speaking the truth? I'm only helping prove the truth of God's Word, so God really can't judge me because I'm only proving what He said is true.

And Paul speaks out against the perversity of such kind of logic and how God will judge all. Now, there are those who, in the name of the Lord, are doing crooked and perverse things, and if you talk to them about it, challenge them, they would be shocked, they would be disturbed. My brother, you know, you're judging me.

Well, the Bible says judge righteous judgment. I think that we've been put off a long time because we are afraid of people saying, well, you're judging, you know. The Bible says by their fruit she shall know them, and it is wrong to use deceit and lies and gimmicks to try to extract funds from the people of God in order to support your program.

I don't care how righteous or good your program may be. My wife told me not to get into this tonight. It's right here in the scripture.

It just came along. I cannot understand men advertising their fasting and prayer when Jesus said, when you fast, anoint your face, wash yourself, that you might look cheerful and all, that you don't appear unto men to fast, and your father, which sees in secret, he'll reward you. And when you pray, don't go out on the street corner, but go into your closet and shut the door.

And when some guy sends letters out all over the country saying, I'm going to spend some time fasting and praying, send me your request with your \$50 check, because I want to pray for you too. Something's wrong. Desperately wrong.

The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. Who can know it? But God declares, I, the Lord, search the heart. I try the reins, that is the motivations, even to give every man according to his ways.

Now, Jesus tells us that we are to be careful that we don't do our righteousness before men to be seen of men, because we have a reward. Now, Jesus plainly warns us about that. There is a way that I can do my righteousness so that people see me and they say, oh my, isn't he spiritual? And we've got to watch out for this because it is such a deceiving, terrible thing.

My old pride and my old flesh wants people to think that I am a spiritual man of God. I like people when I walk by to whisper, oh, isn't he spiritual? Oh, my flesh just really enjoys that. And so it's easy for me to get little spiritual affectations that my mind isn't really necessarily upon God.

As I stand there, you lift your head upward and close your eyes because that looks more spiritual. I wonder if people are seeing me now. Surely they'll know, you know, I'm very spiritual.

I hope they're watching. And then if you go up on your tiptoes, it even looks a little more, you know, spiritual. But my mind, what am I thinking? Am I thinking, I hope they're watching.

I hope they see. I hope they notice. I hope they realize how spiritual I am.

God said, look, I'm searching the heart. I'm trying the motives. Now the Bible tells us that one day all of our works are going to be judged by fire.

And much of what we have done is going to go poof. It's going to go up in smoke. Wait a minute, Lord, did I not prophesy in thy name? Didn't I work miracles in your name? Didn't I, you know, heal the sick in your name? Lord, I, the Lord, search the heart.

I try the rains. All of your works are wood, hay, and stubble. They were done to be seen of men.

They were done for your own glory and to spread abroad in your own name. You named your chapels and your universities and all after your own name. Sad.

Sad. What a day of awakening is going to be. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

Now, David, realizing this, realizing that he didn't even know his own heart because of the deceitfulness of the heart, said, thou, O Lord, has searched me and you know me. You know my thoughts in their origins. Such knowledge, he said, is too great for me.

I cannot attain it. I cannot really attain the true knowledge of myself. But then he said, search me, O God, and know my heart.

Try me and know my thoughts and see if there be some way of wickedness in me and lead me in your way eternal. Now, the man who understands and knows that his heart is deceitful and desperately wicked is the man who will join David's prayer and say, O God, you search my heart. You try me.

And God, if there's something there that is wrong, is displeasing to you, reveal it to me, Lord. I don't want to be deceived. I don't want to be deceiving myself.

I don't want to stand before God and suddenly find all that I've done wiped out in a puff of smoke as the fire consumes all of that work of wood, hay, and stubble. Jesus said, you've not chosen me, but I've chosen you and ordained you that you should be my disciples, that you should bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain. That's what I want, remaining fruit.

And so God help us. He's searching our hearts. He's tries the rain and he's going to give to every man according to his ways.

What's in my heart? Why did I do it? That's what's going to be judged. God is going to give to him according to the fruit of his doings. Now, as a partridge sits on eggs and doesn't hatch them, so is he that gets riches not by right, but by wrong means.

He is accumulating wealth. He shall leave them in the midst of his days and at his end he shall be a fool. A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary.

That place of our sanctuary is God's glorious high throne. O Lord, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth because they have forsaken the Lord. The fountain of living waters takes us back to the first cry of God against Israel in that they have committed two evils.

They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters and hewed out for themselves cisterns that can hold no water. Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed. Save me and I shall be saved for thou art my praise.

Behold, they say unto me, where is the word of the Lord? Let it come now. As for me, I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee. Neither have I desired the woeful day, thou knowest that.

That which came out of my lips was right before thee. He's not rejoicing in the things that he is saying. Be not a terror unto me, thou art my hope in the day of evil.

Let them be confounded that persecute me, but let not me be confounded. Let them be dismayed, but let me not be dismayed. Bring upon them the day of evil.

Destroy them with double destruction. Now the Lord spoke to him concerning the gates where the king went in and went out and he said, now go down to the gate and when the king comes in, give him this message. Thus saith the Lord unto me, go and stand in the gate of the children of the people where the kings of Judah come in and by which way they go out and in all of the gates of Jerusalem and say unto them, hear ye the word of the Lord, ye kings of Judah and all Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem that enter in by these gates.

Thus saith the Lord, take heed to yourselves and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem. Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, neither do ye any work, but howl ye the Sabbath day as I have commanded your fathers. But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear.

Now that is their fathers obeyed not. I told your fathers not to do this, God is saying, but they didn't obey me. Neither did they incline their ear, but they made their neck stiff that they might not hear nor receive instruction.

And it shall come to pass if you diligently hearken unto me, saith the Lord to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but howl the Sabbath day to do no work therein. Then shall there enter into the gates of this city, kings and princes sitting on the throne of David, riding in chariots on horses and they and their princes and the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem in this city shall remain forever. God is still holding out the opportunity of salvation and hope to them.

Even at this late stage of their backsliding, even when the judgment is hanging over their head, even when Babylon is marching to destroy this place, God is still holding out to them a hope. Just turn to me, just obey me. And the gates here, the kings and the princes will be passing through forever.

You'll never be destroyed or put out of the land. God's mercies just are so extensive. They're right up until a moment.

A person dies. God extends his mercy. Oh, how merciful is our God.

And they shall come from the cities of Judah and from the places about Jerusalem and from the land of Benjamin and from the plain and from the mountains and from the South, bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices and meal offerings and incense and bringing sacrifices of praise unto the house of the Lord. It can happen. It can happen to you.

Just turn back to me, just obey my commandments. But if you will not hearken unto me to hallow the Sabbath day and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem and it shall not be quenched. Now in chapter 18, the word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord saying arise and go down to the potter's house and there I will cause thee to hear my words.

Then I went down to the potter's house and behold, he brought a work on the wheels and the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter. So he made it again. Another vessel has seemed good to the potter to make.

Then the word of the Lord came unto me saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter saith the Lord? Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel. Here again, as with Isaiah, the figure of the potter in the clay showing God's awesome sovereignty over man's destiny, God can make of you whatever he pleases. And as Paul the Apostle said in Romans 9, who art thou, O man, who says unto the Lord, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter the power over the clay to make of it whatever kind of a vessel he desires? In those chapters 9, 10 and 11 of Romans where Paul speaks of this awesome sovereignty of God over man, he uses the same figure of the potter in the clay.

Now with Jeremiah, it is interesting. God said, go down to the potter's house and I'm going to speak to you there. He went down to the potter's house.

He saw him as he was working a work on the wheels. So the three objects, the potter, the wheel, the clay, speak of God's dealing and working with man. The clay, a common worthless material in its native state, and yet a material that has a potential of great value and utility according to the skill of the potter.

The potter, his total control over the clay to make of it whatever he desires. God's awesome power over our lives. The wheels, the circumstances of our lives by which God molds and shapes us.

Now, in this case, as he watched the potter, the vessel was marred in the hands of the potter. He was making this vessel on the wheel, but suddenly the vessel took a wrong shape. It maybe had a hard lump in the clay or something.

The vessel was marred. And so the potter just took and crumbled the clay again, or compacted it again, and then made of it a vessel as was good unto him to make. And God spoke and said, is not Israel, the nation Israel, like clay in my hands? And though Israel had been marred, yet God would remake them.

He would work in them again, a new work. The vessel had been marred, but not to be discarded. God would work yet again in making them that which he desires and intended them to be.

At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom to pluck up and to pull down and to destroy it. Now you remember in chapter one, when God called Jeremiah, he said, I have called you over the nations. I've called you in his ministry was to pluck up, to pull down and to destroy.

Now that's quite a ministry to be called to uproot things, Jeremiah, pluck them up, destroy them. You see, there comes a time when the system gets so corrupt. There's, there's no renewing it.

There's no reformation possible. It's gone too far. So before you can rebuild and plant and rebuild, you've got to just get rid of everything that is there.

And that is what God is saying. They've gotten so bad. We're just going to have to get rid of it, go back to zero, and then we'll start all over again.

But you've got to tear down, root out, destroy that which exists. So he brings him back to the first calling in chapter one. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, verse nine, to build and to plant.

So in verse seven, he speaks of the plucking up, pulling down, destroying. Now, if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil and repent of that which I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it.

If you do evil in my sight, that it not obey my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them. Now, therefore, go and speak to the men of Judah and say to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord, behold, I frame evil against you and devise a device against you. Return you now everyone from his evil way and make your ways and your doings good.

And they said, There is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices and we will everyone do the imagination of his evil heart. So they would not listen to Jeremiah. They said, There's no hope.

You know, we're all going to go for it at this point. Therefore, thus saith the Lord, asking now among the heathen who has heard such things. The Virgin of Israel has done a very horrible thing.

Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon from the rock of the field? There shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be forsaken. That beautiful crystal clear snow water that comes out of the ground at the base of the mountains there in Lebanon. Will a man leave that beautiful crystal snow water? Because my people have forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity.

This is forsaken me, that fountain of living water. They have forgotten me. They've burned incense to vanity.

They have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient past to walk in the paths in a way not cast up to make their land desolate and a perpetual hissing. Everyone that passes by shall be astonished and wag his head. I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy.

I will show them my back and not my face in the day of their calamity. Then said they, when Jeremiah delivered this message to them, and then they responded, saying, Come, let us devise devices against Jeremiah, for the law shall not perish from the priest nor counsel from the wise nor the word from the prophet. Come, let us smite him with the tongue and let us not give heed to any of his words.

And so Jeremiah said, Give heed to me, O Lord, and hearken to the voice of them that contend with me. Shall evil be recompensed for good? For they have digged a pit for my soul. Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them and to turn away thy wrath from them.

Now here Jeremiah said, I've been interceding, I've been praying for them, and now they're devising to do me in, God. Remember how good I was, Lord, and remember how evil they are. Therefore, deliver up their children to the famine and pour out their blood by the force of the sword and let their wives be bereaved of their children and be widows and let their men be put to death.

Let the young men be slain by the sword in battle. In other words, I'm not going to intercede for him anymore, God. Go ahead and, you know, give it to him.

Let a cry be heard. He was a melancholy, no doubt, if you've done any personality type of analysis, a great melancholy, and it will show up even more forcibly as we move on into chapter 20. We see the melancholy at his classic height.

Verse 23, Lord, you know all of their counsel against me to slay me. Forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight, but let them be overthrown before they deal thus with them in the time of thine anger. So, the prophet is really upset with him.

Heard again that they're plotting to get him and all, and this time he's had it. God, just take care of him. Do whatever you want.

Wipe him out. I'm not going to pray for them any longer. How different this is from Moses.

You remember Moses as he interceded. Oh God, you know, forgive their sin and if not, blot, I pray thee, my name out of thy book of remembrances. I have a hard time identifying with Moses.

I find a very easy time identifying with Jeremiah. You know, I come to my car and I find someone's ripped off something from my car. Well, I pray, God, you know, get them, smite them, Lord.

Let them fall and break their legs, you know, and just really do them in, Lord, you know. I have no mercy for thieves and people that go around ripping people off. It just really upsets me.

Let the angel of the Lord pursue them, you know, and just give them a bad time, Lord. So, I would classify more with Jeremiah than I would Moses. Thus saith the Lord, go and get a potter's earthen bottle.

Take one of the bottles that the potter has made. Clay bottles. And take the old men of the people and of the priest and go forth into the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the east gate and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee.

Now, the valley of Hinnom runs along the south side of the city of Jerusalem and joins the Kidron Valley right down at the base of the hill of Ophel, which was the city of David. And as you're standing on Mount Zion, as you look down into the valley to the south, you're looking down into the valley of Hinnom. And this is where the children of Israel had done so much of their pagan worship of the gods of the Canaanites and the people who inhabited the land before they came in.

And so, he is to go into this valley where all of these pagan rites were done by the people with this clay jar from the potter's house. So, call the ancient priest and the old men and gather them into the valley and I'll give you my word there. I'll tell you what to speak.

And say, hear ye the word of the Lord, O kings of Judah inhabitants of Jerusalem, thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, behold, I will bring evil upon this place. The witch whosoever hears it, his ears will tingle because they have forsaken me. The reason why the judgment's coming.

They've forsaken me and estranged this place and have burned incense in it unto other gods whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the kings of Judah. And they have filled this place with the blood of innocence. They have built also the high places of bell altars to bell to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings.

Now, if you go over to Israel in the history in the Museum of Natural History, they have a collection in there of these little representations of the God bell. And they are many of them made of iron. Some of them are made of stone.

And as you look at them, their hands are always pointed upwards with their palms in. And they are little figurines that look somewhat human with little arms out like this and hands pointed up. Now, what they would do there in the Valley of Hinnom is that they would set these little iron representations of the God bell in the fire until they were glowing red hot.

And then they would take their live little babies and place them in the glowing red hot arms of the little God bell and burn them to death as they would dance around and worship bell. Now, this is the thing God is crying out against. These are the horrible things that God's people were doing.

These were the horrible sacrileges that they were guilty of. And so God says, they built also the high places to bell to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto bell, which I commanded not nor spoke, neither did it ever come into my mind. Oh, God would never think of having a person make a life sacrifice of a child unto him.

Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that this place shall no more be called Tophet nor the Valley of the son of Hinnom, but the Valley of slaughter. For I will make void the council of Judah and Jerusalem in this place. And I will cause them here in this valley to fall by the sword before their enemies and by the hands of them that seek their lives and their carcasses will I give to be meat for the fowls of the heaven and for the beast of the earth.

And I will make this city desolate and a hissing. Everyone that passes thereby shall be astonished and hiss because of all of the plagues. And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters.

And they shall eat everyone, the flesh of his friend in the siege because of the straightness were with their enemies and they that seek their lives shall straighten them. Then shall thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with you. After you pronounce this, just break that clay bottle in their sight and say unto them, thus saith the Lord of hosts, even so will I break this people and this city as one breaks a potter's vessel that cannot be made whole again and they shall bury them in Tophet until there is no place to bury.

Thus will I do unto this place, saith the Lord and to the inhabitants thereof and even make this city as Tophet. And the houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah shall be defiled as the place of Tophet because of all of the houses upon whose roofs they have burned incense to the host of heaven and have poured out drink offerings unto other gods. So Jeremiah came from Tophet, whether the Lord had sent him to prophesy.

And he stood in the court of the Lord's house and said to the people, thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, behold, I will bring upon this city and upon all of our towns, all of the evil that I've pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words. And so the people were just refusing to listen to the warnings of God. Now Pasher, and the name means prosperity all around.

Now Pasher, the son of Emer, the priest, who was also the chief governor in the house of the Lord, heard that Jeremiah had prophesied these things. Then Pasher smote Jeremiah the prophet and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the Lord. So Jeremiah is now shut up in the stocks by this fellow whose name means prosperity all over the place, you know, prosperity all around.

And he puts, Jeremiah smites him, puts him in the stocks. And it came to pass on the morrow that Pasher brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then said Jeremiah unto him, the Lord hath not called thy name.

Pasher, God doesn't call you prosperity all about, but God calls you terror all around. And so, for thus saith the Lord, behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself and to all your friends, and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it. And I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive unto Babylon, and shall slay them with a sword.

Moreover, I will deliver all the strength of this city, and all the labors thereof, and all of the precious things thereof, and all of the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hand of their enemies, which shall spoil them and take them and carry them to Babylon. So Jeremiah really being in the stocks didn't really quiet him. He just really prophesies unto Pasher the evil that is going to come, his own captivity, and that of his friends, and all of the treasures carried away to Babylon.

And thou, Pasher, and all that dwell in your house shall go into captivity, and you shall come to Babylon, and there you will die and will be buried there, you and all your friends to whom you have prophesied lies. Now Jeremiah cries out to the Lord, O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived. Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed.

I am in derision daily. Everyone mocks me. For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil, because the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me in a derision daily.

Now he's, he's, he laid it on to Pasher, but now he's talking to God saying, God, you know, here I've been prophesying, and they threw me in jail, you know, and speaking in your name, and I got put in stocks. Lord, you know, what's going on here? And, and is that any way to treat your servants, you know, and, and those who are prophesying in your name? And, and so he's really upset. Then said I, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name.

Lord, I'm through. Here's my resignation. I'm finished.

You know, I'm thrown in jail and put in the stocks and all, because I'm speaking your word. Are you going to treat me like that? I'm through, Lord. I, I've had it.

I'm not going to speak again in your name, that's all. You're going to treat me like that. But his word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary trying to hold it back, and I could not stay.

Oh, God's word was just burning. I, I couldn't keep quiet, you know. It's just something that was there, and God's word just burning like a fire, and I, I just, I couldn't, couldn't keep back.

For I heard the defaming of many. Fear was on every side. Report, they say, and we will report it.

And all of my friends watched for my halting. They said, for a venture, he will be enticed, and we will prevail against him. We will take our revenge on him.

But the Lord is with me as a mighty, terrible one. Therefore, my persecutors shall stumble. They're watching for me to stumble, but they're going to stumble, because the Lord is with me.

And they shall not prevail. They shall be greatly ashamed, for they shall not prosper. Their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten.

But, O Lord of hosts that tried the righteous and seized the rains in the hearts, let me see thy vengeance on them, for unto thee have I opened my cause. Sing unto the Lord. Praise ye the Lord, for he hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of the evildoers.

So, he laughs again into a worship of the Lord as he talks to the Lord about these people that are plotting against him. And God has said, you remember, I, the Lord, search the hearts, try the rains. He says, okay, Lord, search the hearts, try the rains, and wipe them out, because you can see what they're doing.

They're evildoers. So, let me see your vengeance on them. Sing unto the Lord.

Praise ye the Lord, for he hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of the evildoers. Now, as I told you, he's a melancholy, because he goes from this, praise the Lord, he's delivered, you know, from the hand of the evildoers, and foop, right down to the bottom. Cursed be the day wherein I was born.

Let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, you've had a boy, making my father very glad. And let that man be as the cities which the Lord overthrew and repented not.

And let him hear the cry of the morning and the shouting at noontide, because he did not slay me when I was born. Or that my mother might have been my grave, my womb, was always in her womb to be always great with me. In other words, had she never brought me forth, had I just been stillborn, died or something, you know, or still in her womb, God cursed the day that I ever came out of the womb and started this whole routine.

Why did I come forth out of the womb to see the labor and sorrow that my days should be consumed with shame? Isn't it amazing how he can go from just this high, oh, praise the Lord, you know, he's done glorious things and all. Cursed be the day I was born. You know, it's amazing how easily Satan can rob us of our joy.

How little it takes to rob us of our joy in the Lord. You know, I can start thinking about what the Lord has done and just get so high. If I'm thinking about God's goodness and God's blessing and all that God has done, I just get rejoicing in the Lord.

I start singing, I make up songs of praise and love to him, and I just, you know, I just get carried away. Oh, Lord, you're so good. I love you.

It's just unreal, Lord, I can't believe what you're doing, you know, and I just get so happy and excited in the Lord and the things of the Lord. And I'm going down the street just so excited worshiping the Lord, and some nut for no apparent reason throws on his brakes right in front of me, you know, and I have to swerve and throw my brakes and, you know, swing around to miss him. You idiot, you know.

And from this glorious spiritual high to this fleshly monster in just such a quick time. It's amazing how quickly we can go from these high spiritual plateaus right down into the depths of despair. He goes from the praising God right into the curse of the day I was born.

Be careful, don't let Satan rob your joy from you. Realize that he's out to do it. Be on guard.

Rejoice in the Lord always. Let your heart rejoice in him. Bring forth praises unto him for his goodness and his blessings and his mercy and his grace.

And when Satan throws these stumbling blocks in the path to bring you down into the flesh, don't allow it. While back going through the market, happy as can be, rejoicing in the Lord. He's so good.

He's blessed me so much. I had a neat thick top sirloin steak in the basket and I thought, Lord, you've given me money to purchase this steak. You know, I'm going to go home and barbecue.

Oh Lord, you know, you were so good to me. I can remember the day when I could never afford a steak like this. And now Lord, here I am blessed of thee.

You're so good to me, Lord. And I was just going around the store rejoicing, praising the Lord, came up to the line, just standing there happy in the Lord, just waiting my turn, you know, just, oh Lord, you're so good. And this little fat guy with a cigar came crowding into the line right in front of me, pushed his way in.

And I thought, why you rude little character. And I was ready to just grab him by the collar, turn him around and say, who do you think you are? Don't you see I'm standing, waiting in line? You get behind me and that cigar. I wanted to just push it right down his throat.

And I was just seething. And the spirit spoke to me and said, oh, such great love, such great rejoicing, such great joy in the Lord, all dissipated over a stinking cigar. I said, no way.

I'm not going to lose my joy over this rude little character. I'm going to take another swing around the store. I didn't have anything more to get, but I went around the store again, just to, just to get back in the right frame of mind.

So that guy would be out of the store by the time I got back to the checking stand, you know, I, I know my limits and I know what I can handle, but up and down a few more aisles and getting the perspectives again, back in the Lord, I came back to the check stand and he was gone. And I had a great victory and a good steak and, and a time of praise, but oh, how, how easily we can lose that praising and rejoicing in the Lord. How quickly Satan can throw a snare out there and just, and man, I'm trapped.

And, and that consciousness of God, that joy and rejoicing is taken. And I feel all of this anger and bitterness and, and all he, he knows where to hit us. He knows how to get us, but let's not let him do it.

Let's keep the right perspective, take another swing around the block or around the store or whatever you have to do in order to maintain that glorious joy and praise and rejoicing in him. Poor Jeremiah, I'll sing unto the Lord, praise the Lord for he has delivered the soul of the poor. Oh, curse would be the day I was

born.

I don't know what happened between those two verses, but something really came in and wiped him out, put him down to the bottom of the barrel. So we pray. Father, we thank you for the joy that we can experience in Christ Jesus.

As we think about the hope that is ours, that eternal life that you have given to us by our simply believing and trusting in him, that inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, that you've reserved in heaven for us. You're keeping power Lord, whereby you keep and strengthen us day by day. Oh Lord, truly we are blessed, blessed to live in this land, blessed with freedoms to worship thee, blessed with thy word that we might know thee, blessed on every side above all nations of the earth.

Oh God, help us to remember the blessings, the good things that you have done. And may we give praise and thanks unto you continually for your goodness. God, keep our hearts in the right place in Jesus name.

Amen. May the Lord be with you and bless you this week. May he watch over your lives and keep you in his love.

May you abound in the love of Jesus Christ. May there just be that rich flowing forth in and from your life as God works in you his perfect work of love and grace. May God grant that you have just a special week of Easter.

Enjoying the goodness and the fullness of God and his love in Jesus name.

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