

A Vision of Our Culture

by Dennis Kinlaw

Jeremiah's ministry shows the sovereignty of God and the importance of perseverance and faithfulness in the face of opposition and suffering.

Duration: 54:43

Scripture: Isaiah 6:6, Jeremiah 1:5, Jeremiah 18:18, Matthew 7:16, Matthew 16:24, John 1:43, Galatians 6:9

Topics: "Vision"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a powerful experience he had during a gathering where he noticed a wave of sound coming from the audience every time he mentioned the name of Jesus. He explains that this wave of sound was the women weeping, and eventually, the men joined in as well. The preacher reflects on the significance of the name of Jesus, stating that when all other options have failed, the name of Jesus holds great power and allure. He then transitions to discussing a passage from Jeremiah where God instructs him to root out, pull down, destroy, overthrow, build, and claim. The preacher admits feeling discouraged by the first four instructions but emphasizes the importance of the last two. He concludes by reminding the audience of the treasure and necessity of God's word and the need for the Holy Spirit's guidance.

Transcript

Let's take a moment and pray again, if you will, with me. Now, Father, as we turn to your Word, we need you, we need your Spirit to help us. We thank you for giving it to us.

What an incredible treasure it is. How much poorer our lives would be if we did not have it. How deep the darkness would be if we did not have your Word.

But we need your Spirit to quicken our minds, our hearts, our understandings to where we can see and to where we can hear. So give us that experience this morning of the touch of the Spirit of God upon us to hear and to see. And we will give you praise in Christ's name.

Amen. Last night, in John's own inimitable way, he dealt with Isaiah and his vision. This morning, I want to turn us to the first chapter of the book of Jeremiah and deal with his experience, which is comparable there to the sixth chapter of the book of Isaiah.

I'm not about to tell you that I have even the vaguest resemblance in terms of knowledge of the text of Jeremiah that John has of the book of Isaiah. But in recent years, and particularly in recent months, Jeremiah has begun to be more interesting to me. For a long time, Jeremiah was one of the books I really didn't care a great deal about in the Old Testament or in the Scripture.

I had problems with it. One of them, it was so blooming long. And another was, it's sort of a jumbled work.

And as you read it, it jumps back and forth in his life, and it's very hard to get a chronology. And it's very hard to get an outline, because there is no outline. If you have to write an article on what Isaiah has to say, you'll have a mess of a time.

You'll have to create your own outline, because it's not found in the book. And, you know, we speak of a Jeremiad, and it's a common word in English language, and it means that it is a message that is a sad one, a dismal one, one that is almost without hope. And so there is a depressing character to the book of Jeremiah.

At least there was for me for a while of a long time. That has begun to turn around. In spite of the fact that I didn't like it and was uncomfortable with it and would read it out of duty, I found myself intrigued by it.

One of the things that intrigued me was that Matthew, in writing the story of the experience of the disciples with Jesus at Caesarea of Philippi, tells us that when Jesus turned to his disciples and said, who do men say that I am, they turned to him and said, well, some say you're John the Baptist, some say you're Elijah, and some say that you are Jeremiah, come back. Now, that caught my interest, caught my attention. Why anyone would liken Jesus to Jeremiah at my stage of the game and my knowledge at that time was totally incomprehensible.

When I read the Gospels, I didn't find anything much in Jesus' ministry that resembled what I found in Jeremiah. I found that Jesus was a great miracle worker, and you can read all 52 chapters of the book of Jeremiah, and there's not a miracle anywhere in it. There is not an act of power in the whole book of Jeremiah.

You have Jesus where he's master of the body and can heal diseases, he can cleanse leprosy, he can give sight to the blind, he can even raise the dead, and Jeremiah is a symbol of human weakness from the beginning of his ministry until the absolute end because we do not even know how he died. There is a tradition that tells us that he was martyred because of his fidelity to God, but we know that he was buffeted around all his life and there is no great moment of power anywhere in his existence. We know that because of that, as a symbol of weakness, the crowds were never enamored with Jeremiah except to be antagonized by him or perhaps intrigued by this strange person who could buck all of the tides of human sentiment that were moving in their day.

He lived in perpetual opposition to his church, to his government, to his society. He lived in perpetual opposition to everything that was visible around him. The end result was that he knew the kind of thing that we enjoy least.

It's worse almost than physical pain and that is for us to be taunted by those about us. Thou, O Lord, knowest. Remember me, think of me, and avenge me of my persecutors.

Take me not away because of thy long suffering. Know that for thy sake I have suffered taunts. Thy words were found and I did eat them and thy words were unto me a joy in the rejoicing of my heart because thy

name was called on me, O Lord of hosts.

I sat not in the assembly of them that make merry nor rejoice. I sat alone because of thy hand for thou hast filled me with indignation. Why is my pain perpetual and my wound infurable so that it refuses to be healed? Wilt thou indeed be unto me as a deceitful brook, as waters that fail? He lived under the taunts and the scorn of the culture that was about him.

You will remember that when Jesus came into the temple he was in fairly good control of things. He was in good enough control that he could release the animals, he could make them take the birds out, he could terrify those that were there so that the priest did not physically seize him there. But if you'll read the 26th chapter of Jeremiah you will find that Jeremiah went into the same temple courts and the priests, the prophets, and the people all turned on him and it was only a few political figures that saved him that day.

The reality is that here's a preacher who had the longest ministry of anybody in the Old Testament that we know about. He began his ministry somewhere around 628 to 626 in the 13th year of King Josiah, however you're going to date the reign of Josiah. And you will remember that he continued his ministry until the city of Jerusalem had fallen which took place about 40 years later.

And then his ministry continued while the people had been carried to Babylon, most of the people, his ministry continued in the city of Jerusalem until he was carried into Egypt and his life disappears there. There was a day when they put him in public stocks. Now I don't know about you, but I had to go check to see what was meant by public stocks.

And what it was was an instrument placed in a public place that had holes to put your ankles in and perhaps, we don't know, holes to put your arms in and you were imprisoned there publicly so everybody who came by could scorn you and if they wanted to, spit on you. There was a day when he was put in chains with the captives and a fire-runner was the one who released him. There was a day when the authorities around him took him and dropped him in a pit that was filled with nothing but mud and he sank in the mire until somebody, an Ethiopian, cared enough about him to come and to help him out.

He was looked upon all his life by his people as a traitor. The political authorities considered him a traitor and said that he was not a true Jew. The religious authorities considered him a traitor, the priests, the prophets considered him a traitor and the people considered him a traitor.

So he moved among his people with that label on him, worse than the aid that was put on the one for adultery. He was an outcast but could not be cast out, an outcast in the midst of his people. And, as I said, his ministry is the longest, it's almost, I am sure, for Jeremiah.

Jeremiah wondered if it would ever end for him. Now, there was an agony in him that comes through very poignantly in the text of Jeremiah. Look at a brief passage.

Let me read it for you in chapter 8, reading from verse 20 or verse 18. Though I would take comfort against sorrow, my heart is faint within me. Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people from a land far off.

Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her king in her? Why have they provoked me with their graven image and with strange vanities? But now listen. The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I seized with anguish.

I am black, appallment has taken hold of me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered? Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people. Now, when I remember coming to the Gospels and Jesus weeping over Jerusalem, I begin to find, yes, there were some similarities between Jesus.

Not at the power level, but there were some similarities at the anguish level, there were some similarities at the pain level that he suffered for his people. Or take another passage that speaks of his own spiritual experience. In the 20th chapter he is talking about his relationship to God.

There are days when he felt that God was against him. You will remember he said, Oh, Lord, you've enticed me. I was enticed, I was trapped.

You, Lord, have overcome me, and you've prevailed. I am become a laughing stock all the day. Everyone mocks me, for as often as I speak I cry out, I cry violence and spoil, because the word of the Lord has made a reproach unto me and a derision all the day.

Now, you will remember that that was strong enough that in the same chapter he began to talk not to the Lord, but he began to talk to himself. And he said, Cursed be the day wherein I was born, the day wherein my mother bore me. Let it not be blessed.

Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man-child is born unto thee, making him very glad. Let that man be as the cities which the Lord overthrew and repented not, and let him hear a cry in the morning and an alarm at noontide, because he did not slay me from the womb, so my mother would have been my grave, and her womb always great. Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labor and sorrow, that my days should be consumed in shame.

That must have been on Monday. I think it's the preachers who laughed on that one. But it's interesting, you find him, he's at odds with everything around him, and there are days when he looks to God and has trouble with him, and he looks to himself and wishes he had never existed.

But the pain may be expressed and indicated most greatly in passages like this that I missed for a long time. Where he prays for his people. Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah.

For instruction will not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, let us smite him with the tongue. Let us not give heed to any of his words.

And then he begins to pray. 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 how I stood before you to turn away your wrath from them. Remember how I stood before you and interceded for them. And now he says, So, Lord, deliver their children up to the famine.

You hurl them to the power of the sword. You let their wives be bereaved of their children and widows. You let their men be slain of death.

You let their young men be smitten of the sword in battle. Let a cry be heard from their houses when you will bring a troop suddenly upon them. For they have digged a pit to take me, and they have hid snares for my feet.

Yet, Lord, you know all their counsel against me is to slay me. Forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from your sight, but let them be made to stumble before you. Deal with them in the time of your anger.

Now you can say that he wasn't a Christian. But the context that evoked that kind of cry was he had been a man who had given his life for these people. And he had prayed for them, and now they are destroying him.

And there's something in him that says, Lord, this isn't right. There is an injustice here. And he's not God.

And so what you get is the groundwork that is being laid for the ministry of Christ so that when Christ came, we have a clearer context in which to see what God is in contrast to what you and I are. So it is an amazing book in terms of this kind of thing. But the beautiful thing is, with all of his problems, he kept coming back.

He could have retired, or he could have quit. He could have taken up another profession. But the astounding thing is, Sunday by Sunday by Sunday by Sunday, month in and month out, and year in and year out, and decade in and decade out, and it may be a quarter of a century and a quarter of a century, he kept coming back.

Now how did you do that? The astounding thing is that somewhere within all of the anguish of his soul, he knew that the ultimate end was going to be right. You remember the day, I think it was a Monday, when God said to him, I want you to go down to the potter's house. And he said, Lord, I know all about the potter.

Don't bother me with that stuff today. I just want to mow. And God said, no, go down to the potter's house.

And you will remember he watched the potter as he put the piece of clay on the wheel and began to pump the pedal. And as he did, that bit of amorphous clay under his hand began to turn into a beautiful vessel, right there, a beautiful piece of pottery right under his nose. And I'm sure that as he watched, just the same way you and I, though he was more familiar with that than many of us, he became a bit enamored and began to forget about himself to see what was doing, when suddenly he saw a disappointing look across the potter's face.

And he looked, and there was a streak across the piece of pottery, and the potter took it. And he said, I knew the vessel was useless, and I waited for him to take it and throw it away. But he took the very vessel that was marred, and he took it and he made him again a vessel as seemed good unto him.

And God said, you've given up on Jerusalem, you've given up on my people. Now, yes, they're marred, but I want you to know that I can yet make them again another vessel as seems good to me. And that message is always there somewhere, if you look, in the message of Jeremiah.

It perhaps comes most clearly in that passage, you will remember, in 31, which is picked up and repeated in the New Testament, and is such a basic statement in relation to the New Testament, where Jeremiah says, you did something great for us in the Exodus. At Sinai you gave to us a covenant, and in the Exodus and at Sinai you made us your people, you gave us your law so we had it in the box in the temple, but there's coming a day when you're going to give us a new temple. There's coming a day when you're going to give us a new covenant, and when you give us the new covenant, it's not going to be on tables in a box, it's going to be in the human heart, the way Ken talked about it last night, bore witness to it, and all the full

potential of grace that you find in the New Testament is implicitly spoken of there as Isaiah speaks about what he knows God wants to do in the human heart.

So I think it was that that sort of helped him and kept him coming back. So with those things I have become more and more interested in Jeremiah. Now with that as sort of background, I'd like to turn to the first chapter and look at some aspects of that first chapter that may be of value to some of us.

You will notice that it is a very simple story. As he dates it, he tells when it came. One of the things I love about Scripture is that most of the experiences of God like this are dated.

Isaiah's is in the year that King Uzziah died. This one is in the 13th year of the reign of Josiah. I noticed that Rick last night said it was a year ago today, and now Mr. Smith today has picked it up and repeated the same thing.

For years I missed the significance in Wesley's testimony when he went to Aldersgate Street and he said, you know, he tells about how his heart was strangely warmed and he felt that God for Christ's sake had forgiven him his sins, even his, and that he was accepted with God. But it may be that one of the most significant things in that whole thing is just simply the phrase, and at about a quarter before nine. Now, Everett's didn't come that way, but that doesn't undo the fact that it was in time and space and in his diary, in his personal journey, at a distinct time that God came to him.

And that's the beauty about times like this. Things can happen in three days together that have calendrical significance for us. And that's the beauty about God when he touches time, when he touches us in our time and space, that's the thing that's worth noting and that's the thing that's worth writing about.

And everything in Jeremiah is anchored to this single experience when he met God, when God met him. Now, let me make a few comments about it. You will notice he says, And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee.

Before you came forth out of the womb, I sanctified you. I have appointed you a prophet unto the nation. Now, for a long time I was bothered by that first thing where he says, Before I formed you in the belly, I knew you.

And before you came out of the womb, I sanctified you. I've come to love that. I like the fact that there are no surprises for God.

A man and his wife went to bed in Israel, in Anathoth, and something happened, and Jeremiah was the result. But there was nothing about that that surprised God. He knew it long before that couple ever even met, not to say anything about got married.

Isn't it interesting that God knew all about you before your mom and dad ever dreamed about you? Somehow in that computer mind of God, it was all there about every single one of us, and about every aborted baby. He has this incredible interest in individuals, individual persons. He knows everyone that will ever be born.

He knows everyone that ever has been. Every individual has a unique relationship to the Sovereign Lord. So that means that our human freedom that he gave us does not mean that God is ever caught by surprise.

Our human freedom does not affect his knowledge. He knows it all. And the beautiful thing is, our human freedom does not thwart his ultimate purpose, because he's the beginning and he's the end.

And when it's all over with, every knee will have bowed and every tongue will have confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. You'll forgive me digressing in a moment. I was talking with somebody yesterday by telephone or over the weekend, and we were talking about this, and I said, it was interesting the day, the last day that the Russian flag flew, and when it came down for the last time.

And you're aware that the last time the Soviet flag, the greatest symbol of atheism in human history, and a symbol of absolute opposition to Jesus Christ and his kingdom, the last day it ever flew was Christmas. And on the evening of Christmas Day, it came down for the last time. But ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN didn't talk about that.

But when you and I read the ultimate history of human mankind, that'll be one of the signs, one of those second witnesses that's there, that he reigns, he rules. There are no surprises for him. And our human freedom does not thwart his ultimate sovereignty overall.

Now, no surprises for God. You will notice he has an individual plan for Jeremiah. He said, I have appointed you a prophet unto the nation.

I sanctified you from your mother's womb before you came out, and I made you to be a prophet to the nation. You know, I think that that is a stronger reality than oftentimes I have been willing to acknowledge. I am convinced that there is a sense of destiny in every human person.

One of the things that differentiates us from any other animal in the creation is a sense of destiny that you and I are here for a purpose. And there's something in every single one of us that says we're here for something important and significant. There is nothing more destructive to us than for that to be shattered inside us.

Now, we can pervert it and twist it and move it into arrogance. We can pervert it and twist it and move it into self-centeredness and self-interest. But the reality is that God never made anybody, planned anybody for insignificance.

There is something to be eternally significant about every one of us. Now, I've come to love a text in Jeremiah in the 10th chapter where he says, I know, O Yahweh, I've come to know you personally, and knowing you personally, I know something else. I know that Adam's way is not in himself.

It is not in the individual who walks to direct his steps. That our way, Adam's way, man's way, the individual's way, our way corporately, our way individually is in him because he's the center of all. Now, the third thing that interests me in this passage is the presence of the negative in his life.

You will notice he says, verse 9, The Lord put forth his hand and touched my mouth, and he said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I of this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms to root out, to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant. That really is a phenomenal verse.

Here's a man who's living in a village three miles outside of Jerusalem, and God says to this young man, because he's a young man, you remember, he told God that. He said, I'm just a child. And the Lord said, Don't say that.

Whomever I send you, you will go, and whatever I command you to do, you will speak. Don't be afraid of them, because I'm going to be with you to deliver you, the eternal God with a boy. He says, I'll be with you, and the eternal God with a boy is better than anything the world has to offer without God.

Now he says, I have set you over the nations and over kingdoms. Interesting. One of the things I want to ask Jeremiah when I see him is how do you interpret that back there in Anathoth when you were a kid? We all have had our dreams, but here are dreams that were given by the eternal God to us.

I'm going to put you over the nations and over the kingdoms. I hope we can get back to that a little later. But he said, Now what I want you to do is to root out, I want you to pull down, I want you to destroy, and I want you to overthrow, and I want you to build, and I want you to claim.

Now the way I am when I read that, I was so depressed by the first four things, I didn't notice the last two. I thought, well, he had to put those in to look good, to look pious and look appropriate. But his message and his ministry was a message apparently of destruction.

To root out, to pull down, to destroy, to overthrow, to build, and to claim. Now as I've lived a little bit with the text of Jeremiah, one of the things that interests me is that those words are not casually spoken here, and Jeremiah did not take them casually. There is a sense in which these four words, root out, pull down, destroy, and overthrow, are like the theme in a Beethoven symphony.

You hear it, and then it disappears, and then it comes back again, then you hear it again, it disappears, and it comes back again, and somewhere before the movement is over, you'll hear it brought back in again triumphantly. Now if you'll work your way through the book of Jeremiah, you'll find that those words were burned into Jeremiah's soul. I was interested that the word destroy is used only 261 times, somewhere about that in the Old Testament.

He used it 32 times. Isaiah, his book as long as Jeremiah's, never used it but six times. So he used it five and a half times as many times as Jeremiah did, as Isaiah did.

The word to overthrow is used 42 times in the Old Testament. Jeremiah uses it seven. Isaiah never used it but three in his whole book.

The word to pull down is used 42 times in the Old Testament. It's used seven times by Jeremiah. Isaiah used it once.

But the word to root out, to root out, never occurred but 20 times in all the Old Testament. It's used 11 times in Jeremiah, and it never occurred in Isaiah. He was called to a rooting out ministry.

It was negative. Jeremiah heard God, and his ministry does have the negative element. But now that brings me to something that I want to see if I can say with some kind of clarity.

I think it means that his understanding of what it meant to be liberated was different from anybody's else. We got the word last night. I've forgotten now who said it when we were talking about liberation.

I think it was Ken who was talking about liberation. The people all around him understood exactly what they meant when they wanted to be liberated, when they wanted to be redeemed, when they wanted to be delivered. They wanted to be delivered from Babylon, and they wanted to be delivered from the external bondage, the pressures that they brought, that Babylon brought, and the external bondage for which they

were headed when they were carried into captivity.

But Jeremiah never really had any great interest in that. He was interested in another kind of liberation. It centers around two words.

One of them is idolatry, and the other is basically, a good English equivalent, I think, would be apostasy. It may be that the key word in all of Jeremiah's preaching in terms of the sin of Israel, the sin of Judah, though he takes the Ten Commandments or takes the latter part of the Ten Commandments and speaks about their adultery, their sinfulness, their lewdness, their harlotries, he speaks about their killing, he speaks about their sacrificing babies to their false god, their own children to their false god. He speaks about their lying, their deceit, and all of these, but the most recurrent note is, you have forsaken Yahweh.

You have forsaken Yahweh. Now I don't know about you, but the most significant thing in America today is that we have forsaken God. We have done it nationally.

We are doing it religiously. We have done it intellectually. We have forsaken Yahweh.

Now who is the God that they have forsaken? He's not just capital G-O-D. He is Yahweh, the God who has revealed himself by name. And the God that America has forsaken is the God who revealed himself as Mary's baby and as the object of the temple's wrath on Calvary and the palace, unwillingness to stand.

And it's interesting that the symbol of him is used more freely by the people who have rejected him than those of us who know him and try to honor him. It's interesting, Madonna cannot appear in public without a cross somewhere on her bead. The Judgment Day will be an interesting one.

In Jeremiah's day, his society, Jeremiah said, you've got the temple, you've got the ceremonies, you've got the rituals, you've got all those symbols of it, but you've rejected the one that is symbolized, you have forsaken me. That makes you an idolater, and it makes you an adulterer spiritually. I wish I knew enough to deal with the concept of marriage in the Scripture.

I am enamored that all through Jeremiah he speaks of their adultery. And as he speaks about it, it's because they have forsaken Yahweh, which means he had a very strong underlying conviction that Israel was the bride of Yahweh, and that when they turned away, it was as tragic and as evil as when a wife seeks another bed other than her husband's and another lover other than her husband's. Now think of the intimacy that that means that Jeremiah felt, that Yahweh, the true and living God, wanted with his people, and that kind of intimacy those people had rejected.

And that's what we've done, isn't it? We have lost the intimacy with Christ. A friend of mine was talking to me the other day from the West Coast, and he was telling me about a project that is underway in one of the major universities out there in the Department of Higher Education, interestingly. They're doing a study of the Wimber Vineyard Movement, and the graduate students have on tape 800 testimonies from people that found Christ through the Wimber Movement.

I said, are the people doing this born-again Christians? Oh, heavens no, said the professor, who came from an evangelical background, has now ditched all of that and is quite liberal in his thinking, said one day in class, but of course the reality is that any church that does not bring people to a religious experience is headed for oblivion. And one of the students looked up and said, now we know what church you go to. Does your church give people a religious experience? And he said, heavens no.

One of the major denominations in our country. Now these are not born-again people, but the church is supposed to give. What God is after is this kind of personal knowledge, and that's the reason we love being in this kind of fellowship, because with you I find somebody who's known that intimacy with me that has transformed my life.

And so we're brothers and sisters together because of a common experience of intimacy with him. And Jeremiah says he wants an intimacy as great as that between the most intimate of all human relationships. It's interesting that the fatherhood of God begins to be spelled out in Jeremiah.

And so part of the groundwork for the trinity is laid in Jeremiah. But it is an intimacy that he wants that's greater than that, because there is an intimacy that is greater than the intimacy between parent and child, precious as that is. We've got five kids and we've got 16 grandchildren.

And what a joy that is. But there is another kind of intimacy that has a uniqueness about it, a totality about it, and a singularity about it that parent-child relationship does not have. Now that is what is assumed.

Jeremiah never spells that out. But you cannot understand Jeremiah unless you know that that is the way he thinks, maybe unconsciously, but that's the way he thinks. And he says, my people have forsaken their spouse.

They have forsaken him. Now, I said that his understanding of liberation and the people around him, their understanding of liberation was different. You see, what he wanted, felt that God wanted to liberate Israel from, was from that apostate heart, not political bond.

Because you can be delivered from political bondage and still be enslaved. What he knew that God wanted to do was to deliver them from their idolatry and from their polytheism. I was interested in what John said yesterday, and I can't remember whom he quoted when he said, the problem with the Jews in human history is their monotheism and their separation.

And because of their monotheism and their separation, they've been hated across the centuries. And of course the reason is, once you come to monotheism and say there is one God and he's absolute, once you get an absolute, you're indigestible by a relative cult. A relativistic culture cannot assimilate, they cannot digest you.

And what do you do with things that you can't digest? You expel them from your system. If it can't be digested, you have no option but to expel. And so that's what Jeremiah wanted them to be delivered from, that inability to accept the ultimate and the absolute.

Now, I've come to believe that we need to hear some of that. Wait a minute, let me change that we to a single person, singular. I need to understand some of that.

Because my notion of what redemption may be for me may be a far cry from what God's notion of redemption may be. Let me use an illustration which some of you have heard me use before. But I notice that you get different accounts of the same thing in the Gospels, in the four Gospels, so give me the privilege of repetition.

The story of Joseph Zahn, the Romanian Baptist pastor, who, because of his challenge to the government and some of its policy, you will remember the persecution that he endured. They interrogated him. They stripped his home and his church of all of his personal books except for two.

One of them was Martin E. Muller's prison experiences that somehow they missed, and the other was E. Stanley Jones' abundant living. And they began to interrogate him six days a week, and they began to interrogate him up to 12 hours a day, the purpose of which was to traumatize him, just destroy him with fear, and they were succeeding. John Oswald told me, Joseph never told me this, but John said that Joseph told him that oftentimes the interrogation would take place with a loaded cocked revolver between him on the table and the person doing the interrogating, and of course the handle was on the interrogator's side.

And it was that kind of intimidation day after day. Joseph prayed, and his understanding of liberation was to be delivered from the interrogation and from the intimidation. And one day he said, I came in my, walked in my study, shut the door, fell on my face, and said, God, they're destroying me.

I can't take any more. And now that brigadier looked at me and he said, Ken Lloyd, I don't think this ever happened but three times. But he said, I think I heard a voice.

And the voice said, Joseph, get up. And I got up, and the voice said, read the book on the shelf. And it was E. Stanley Jones, the only book on the shelf.

And he pulled it down, and the page that his eyes hit was on how to live above your circumstances. And his thought was, God, you're kidding. And the Lord said, no, I'm not.

He said, you don't mean that I'm supposed to embrace this kind of trial. And the Lord said, yeah. Well, he said, you've got to do something in my heart you haven't done before.

God said, now we're getting down to real liberation. And he said, God delivered me. He said, then the funny thing was where the pressure was.

The people who had the problem sat on the other side of the table. I didn't anymore. I was free.

And they didn't know what to do with me. Now, we may need to think through what liberation is, what salvation is. I think that's the reason for the negatives, because the false options have to be destroyed.

And if the false options have to be destroyed, you see, what are those false options? A temple. But it's a temple without Yahweh. Now, if it's a temple without Yahweh, it is a false option, and it's got to come down.

It may be an intellectual system that does not have Him in it. Then it has to be exploded. It may be the social sciences.

Do you hear me? Because if we have a problem today, what do we do? We reach for social sciences. And the social sciences normally do not have the deliverer in them. I don't think it's any question we're going to see a rejection of the social sciences because they're a false god.

And the problem is that when we rebel against them, we're going to lose something that in themselves they are very good. But you see, when you let the good take the place of God, then the good has to be destroyed. And we lose, always, by our idolatry.

Any kind, anywhere. Now, linked with that is another story which you've heard me tell about Sam Kamalatian, who called me about ten days before the Berlin Wall fell. And he told me about an evangelistic crusade he was in.

I didn't know you could have evangelistic crusades behind the Iron Curtain in those days. He said, but we did. We had the place packed every night.

It was in Romania. And he said, every night when I gave an invitation, he said hundreds came. One night I didn't give an invitation, hundreds came anyway.

He said, I watched Greek Orthodox priests in their regalia come forward in response to a gospel invitation. He said, but one night I noticed in my crowd something I had not noticed before. He said it was sound that I couldn't explain.

He said, then I noticed that the sound came in waves. Then he said, I noticed the wave of sound came every time I used the name of Jesus. Then he said, I realized that the wave of sound was the women in my audience weeping.

Then he said, the sound got louder, and I realized the men had joined me. And he said, Ten Law, by that point, every time I used the name of Jesus, I was weeping too. Then he said this, I will never forget it.

Jeremiah would have understood this. He said, you know, Ten Law, when the last alternative option to Jesus has been exhausted and shown for its true bankruptcy, the name of Jesus takes on great power and allure. And I got a glimpse of what that day is going to be like when every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

There will be a negative side to that day, because that will be the day when the bankruptcy of every alternative option has been made clear. Now, you and I live in a culture that's got a lot of alternative options. And I'm convinced that America is one of those alternative options.

Our society is one of those alternative options. The whole world wants to come here. You know that.

So it has to be shown for what it is. And you and I are going to have to stand by while our society collapses the way Jeremiah, a priest, stood by while the temple was destroyed and the priesthood. Because the good is a false option as an alternative to God is still a false option.

So the negative is there. And sometimes it takes a little more of the negative before you can get to the positive. So you got the root out, pull down, destroy, and overthrow.

But that's not the end. The end is to build and to plant. Now, you know, I didn't know what to do with the plant.

I'm not a farmer. But you know what the word, what is meant here? You don't plant for today. You plant for the future.

You plant for the future. God said, you're building for the future. And if you're faithful, what you're doing will bear its own fruit in the days ahead.

Now, there's another thing I want to say out of this that is that God is in a lot bigger business than I think Jeremiah thought he was. You know, it's interesting, the little things that intrigue you. I've been reading lately a book which is an anthology on Old Testament theology.

It has sections taken out of every major Old Testament theologian over the last, in this century. And I've been working my way through everything from Funrod to Childs to Brueggemann, even back to Gabler in

the 16th century, this kind of thing. But they're all there.

I've been interested in these professors from Cubic and Gerdig and Oxford and Harvard and University of Chicago, University of Paris. You know, one of the guys that every one of them has studied? Every one of them has poured extensively over the writings of that guy who was born in Anathema. And some of the brightest brains in the world are pouring 2,600 years later over what he was doing.

And when Jesus came, I have decided, and see if you can hear me on this, and I don't know enough to say this well, but I believe it's there. There are two pictures in the Old Testament that help us understand Jesus better than anything else. One of them is Isaiah 53, where it describes the God who is lowly.

He's not the God who just sits on high. He's the one who stoops to a cross. And if you look at human history, the best example that I can find is one who'd never even seen that, and it's Jeremiah.

And the interesting thing is that out of Jeremiah's ministry and God's prophets, Israel was cured of the dogma. One thing you know when you find Jews today is monotheists, they're monotheists. Now, how were they cured? They were cured by the suffering faithfulness of a man of God named Jeremiah that I suspect never dreamed he'd ever be heard of beyond his own day.

And then all he knew was taunts and contempt. But I suspect that there is more in Jeremiah to help us understand the suffering servant than in any other prophet in the Old Testament. I don't know about you, but I've come to the place where I've decided that nobody ever changes until somebody else has suffered.

That nobody ever changes until somebody else has hurt. And the supreme thing, of course, is Jesus. And we say that, and you say, well, of course.

But the one that we take as a supreme example, in the Gospel of John, never told anybody to believe on him. He said, follow me. And when he said, follow me, he was headed for the cross.

Now, you see, I want to be delivered from the cross. That's what I understand is liberation. But if I understand Jeremiah right and the Scripture right, the deliverance is to be able to walk straight through it.

Victorious. Wait a minute. Change that word victorious.

Faithful. Faithful.

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