

Renewed! 7-8-01
Jeremiah 15

I'm getting a little more familiar with this man of God, Jeremiah. What an amazing vessel for God! As we look through this chapter keep in mind last week's message. If we will not listen to God and obey we end up following our stubborn hearts.

Jer 15:1 (NIV)¹ Then the LORD said to me: "Even if Moses and Samuel were to stand before me, my heart would not go out to this people. Send them away from my presence! Let them go!

Moses was the Bible's second greatest example of an intercessor, Jesus, of course being the greatest. Both Moses and Samuel were men who were on a talking basis with God. And here God seems to be saying that if anyone could change his mind about judgement it would be one of these guys, yet even if they teamed up to pray for Judah God would not change his mind about what must be done. "Get this nation of people out of my sight!" God is saying. Don't hang on to them, release them. 1000 years of dealing with these stubborn people is enough. Time to end it – they can't keep the covenant no matter how many prophets speak the word of the LORD to them.

Jer 15:2-3 (NIV)² And if they ask you, 'Where shall we go?' tell them, 'This is what the LORD says: "Those destined for death, to death; those for the sword, to the sword; those for starvation, to starvation; those for captivity, to captivity."³ "I will send four kinds of destroyers against them," declares the LORD, "the sword to kill and the dogs to drag away and the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth to devour and destroy.

Fours are the number of created things, four directions, four living creatures, earth wind fire water, etc – God is saying He is turning his creation against them to destroy them. Imagine having to preach this message. We may have to if this nation does not turn around. Now, why is this? They did not listen, but there are a few detailed reasons and one is in this next verse.

Jer 15:4 (NIV)⁴ I will make them abhorrent to all the kingdoms of the earth because of what Manasseh son of Hezekiah king of Judah did in Jerusalem.

Because of what Manasseh did. 2 Kings 21:11-12 (NIV)¹¹ "Manasseh king of Judah has committed these detestable sins. He has done more evil than the Amorites who preceded him and has led Judah into sin with his idols.¹² Therefore this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I am going to bring such disaster on Jerusalem and Judah that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle.

So first it was because they never repented from the idolatry Manasseh led them into and instead embraced it.

2 Kings 24:3-4 (NIV)³ Surely these things happened to Judah according to the Lord's command, in order to remove them from his presence because of the sins of Manasseh and all he had done,⁴ including the shedding of innocent blood. For he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD was not willing to forgive.

Secondly that idolatry involved burning babies on a glowing hot idol named Moloch. God loves mankind. If you really want to see his wrath -destroy the innocent. What kind of wrath is America incurring daily? Will God let it slide?

Manasseh had been dead for at least 15 years when Jeremiah uttered this prophetic word. God is patient. But the fruits of what Manasseh sowed were on the increase and the time had come to deal with them. It makes me wonder what will happen in the years ahead because of what our leaders have sown and how the nation has reacted to it.

Jer 15:5-6 (NIV)⁵ "Who will have pity on you, O Jerusalem? Who will mourn for you? Who will stop to ask how you are?⁶ You have rejected me," declares the LORD. "You keep on backsliding. So I will lay hands on you and destroy you; I can no longer show compassion.

If the Lord rejects you because of sin – you have no one. Who are you going to turn to – the selfish world? God's children? - should they make it easier for those who reject their Father? Sometimes we rescue people when the best thing for them is to face the music. The word of the Lord has been delivered to them and Judah continues backsliding. So God is about to lay hands on them. God's hand upon you will bless you or destroy you depending upon the condition of your heart. God laid his hand on Daniel and John the Beloved to strengthen them. He laid his hand on others to anoint them. They were yielded hearts that recognized their need. Judah wanted nothing to do with the hand of God so his hand upon them would destroy them. Do you desire the hand of God upon your life? A few verses later we will read about his hand on Jeremiah.

Jer 15:7-9 (NIV)⁷ I will winnow them with a winnowing fork at the city gates of the land. I will bring bereavement and destruction on my people, for they have not changed their ways.⁸ I will make their widows more numerous than the sand of the sea. At midday I will bring a destroyer against the mothers of their young men; suddenly I will bring down on them anguish and terror.⁹ The mother of seven will grow faint and breathe her last. Her sun will set while it is still day; she will be disgraced and humiliated. I will put the survivors to the sword before their enemies," declares the LORD.

This is God's uncompromising message through Jeremiah. It should call the people to repentance before it is too late, but instead it angered them.

¹⁰ Alas, my mother, that you gave me birth, a man with whom the whole land strives and contends! I have neither lent nor borrowed, yet everyone curses me.

The people were angry with Jeremiah and argued with him. If you lend money or borrow money you're more than likely to end up being cursed by someone. But Jeremiah had done neither. Still, everyone cursed him because of God's message. He is just the messenger but even His own family spoke against him behind his back. Jer 12:6 (NIV)⁶ Your brothers, your own family-- even they have betrayed you; they have raised a loud cry against you. Do not trust them, though they speak well of you.

I can't imagine his loneliness he must have felt. When we speak the truth we will often face rejection but if the Spirit of God is speaking it, we must – regardless of the reaction we receive. It is the most loving thing we can do. None of us have ever faced the total loneliness that Jeremiah faced. He must have been very strong in the Lord as the LORD only gives us what we can bear. Most of us have an encourager and each other to lean on so

that we aren't pressed to the extreme Jeremiah was. Are we willing to stand against everyone with an unpopular message? Today the message of Jesus is becoming as unpopular as Jeremiah's. "The only way to God? How dare you be so intolerant." If it is the truth, we must speak it regardless of what it does in our relationships.

¹¹ The LORD said, "Surely I will deliver you for a good purpose; surely I will make your enemies plead with you in times of disaster and times of distress. Those same people who rejected your words come to you in their calamity and ask for guidance. I have seen it many times.

¹² "Can a man break iron-- iron from the north--or bronze?¹³ Your wealth and your treasures I will give as plunder, without charge, because of all your sins throughout your country.¹⁴ I will enslave you to your enemies in a land you do not know, for my anger will kindle a fire that will burn against you."

The trial they will face will be too strong for man. The wealth and treasures they served idols for will go to others. And that is the fate of all who place their trust and hope in anything other than the LORD God.

Jeremiah prays for protection from his own people:¹⁵ You understand, O LORD; remember me and care for me. Avenge me on my persecutors. You are long-suffering--do not take me away; think of how I suffer reproach for your sake.

What a comfort to know God understands, remembers, and cares for us. We in the church sometimes face this too. When the church is compromising we should stand up for the Word of God and declare it with boldness and love. We may need to pray for the same protection Jeremiah is praying for. The early church faced this in Jewish synagogues. Our worst adversaries can be the religious who have compromised and don't want to hear the Word but prefer man's ways and their personal preferences. What an honor it is to suffer reproach for the sake of the LORD.

¹⁶ When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty.

Unlike the people, Jeremiah ate up the Word of the Lord and found it to be a joy and his heart's delight to hear from God. The prophets were referred to as the servants of the Lord. So in bearing the name of the Lord, He felt it a great joy to be the recipient of the eternal Word. Is the Word your joy and heart's delight? Do you bear the name, "Christian"?

¹⁷ I never sat in the company of revelers, never made merry with them; I sat alone because your hand was on me and you had filled me with indignation.

He couldn't just party like everyone else, knowing calamity was at the door. When I was young I got drunk with my buddies but I would sit and cry with conviction because of the Spirit of the Lord upon me. Jeremiah couldn't even join their company. His heart was so grieved at sin - at the thought of how his people had forsaken God - that he shared God's feelings about their sin. That was the result of the Lord's hand upon him. Earlier the LORD said his hand was upon the people to destroy them. Here his hand is upon Jeremiah to keep

him from the wickedness of the people and to share God's heart toward their sin. I think we should pray for God's hand to be on us like it was on Jeremiah. We need to have God's attitude toward sin in our country, in our churches, in our families, in our life.

¹⁸ Why is my pain unending and my wound grievous and incurable? Will you be to me like a deceptive brook, like a spring that fails?

I'm not sure if this is the wounded spirit he felt or if this was some physical affliction. I tend to think it was the latter or even a combination. Have you ever felt like that, wondering why you were suffering rejection from people for God's sake and sick at the same time as if God had rejected you too? Certainly Jesus felt that way on the cross, but He did not make the analogy Jeremiah did, for He knew better. What is Jeremiah accusing God of? He knew God is the fountain of living water and there is no deception in Him.

I think Jeremiah was tempted to forsake his ministry. He seems to be doubting the very character of God. Before you get down on Jeremiah look what he was facing and consider your own temptations to give up on your call. We all face those dark nights of the soul when the enemy tempts us to give it up for what he calls "an easier path". Watch God's response to this prayer: ¹⁹ Therefore this is what the LORD says: "If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve me; if you utter worthy, not worthless words, you will be my spokesman. Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them.

God has said it is too late for the nation to repent but it is not too late for Jeremiah to repent of this attitude. It is not too late for you either if the thought has crossed your mind. You know the enemy is subtle. He'll show you a neighbor's life and make them look like they are good people and enjoying the world. Take a deeper look. The surface may look nice but without the love of Christ and a real relationship with Him there is no real purpose or value in any of it. Satan is a liar. Get used to recognizing when it is his voice and tell yourself and him – "You're a liar!" God's path may be tough but it is the richest, the most fulfilling, the only one of value with eternal rewards. Don't get tricked into feeling sorry for suffering for the cause of Christ. It's an honor and a great tool to prepare you to share his glory!

Repent! Speak words of value – not complaining and whining and doubts about God's character but words of faith and truth and praise. The people will turn to you because they see you have something of value and worth in time of need. But don't even think of turning to them – don't consider trading your calling for fitting in with pleasures of the world that are empty. "You must not turn to them", God says.

²⁰ I will make you a wall to this people, a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you to rescue and save you," declares the LORD.

This is the same thing God spoke to Jeremiah when He first called him. Knowing Jeremiah I think when God said repent, Jeremiah knew exactly what of and repented on the spot. In chapter 17 he calls God the Spring of Living water and says he has not run away from his calling. He sat at that crossroad when God said, "repent". The moment he did, God renewed his call and the promise He gave Him when He first called him. God had made him a strong fortified wall, but by his own desires Jeremiah had made himself weak, and began to doubt the promise and the character of God. He needed the renewal of the promise to walk in it

again. If you fail in your calling – God will be the same with you. He will tell you your need to repent and the instant you do – your calling and the promises to you are renewed. Thank God He is longsuffering.

²¹ "I will save you from the hands of the wicked and redeem you from the grasp of the cruel."

Now God can answer his prayer. See how Jeremiah asked for this protection in verse 15. God first says, "Get right with me son. Give up any idea of forsaking your call. Let go of those doubts as to my faithfulness." Then when Jeremiah responds in repentance, God says, "Now I can protect you from the hands of the wicked and redeem you from the grasp of the cruel." The wicked are the people of Judah and the cruel are the Babylonians. It doesn't mean Jeremiah won't suffer and be persecuted (he'll spend many a day in stocks out in the burning sun and cold of night), but he will be more than a conqueror in the persecution and will remain that steadfast wall through it all. In every persecution he was delivered and even honored by the conquering king. He is believed to have lived into his 90s and certainly was honored by the King of kings when he went to his reward.

We can learn a lot from Jeremiah's renewal. Though he was faithful in more extreme circumstances than most of us, we know that God is no respecter of persons and will deal with us as He did with Jeremiah. When you are tempted, the Spirit will be faithful to you also. Repent immediately of any thoughts that would be doubts about the faithful and consistent character of God, and just as God was good to renew Jeremiah – He will renew you. He'll renew your call, and He'll renew his promises to you and strengthen you for the battle ahead. He is the Spring of Living water! Get your refreshment in Him and stand strong in the truth of the character of our mighty God. If we are to be healed it must be the LORD. If we are to be saved it is only by His hand, not a man and certainly not self. Where else can we go? He alone is the Spring of Living Water.