

## The Weekly Word

January 9-15, 2012

Jeremiah has been called, by some, as 'the weeping prophet.' Given the topics for the week, it is hard to say 'happy reading' but we are reading the Word of God together/. So, happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

### Monday, January 9: Jeremiah 11-Personal Cost...

Throughout the last chapters I have wondered about Jeremiah and the emotional cost he experienced having to bring word of judgment after word of judgment. I could imagine that a call and task like that would bring heavy emotional toll. What I never considered was death threats and plots against his life. Toward the end of today's reading, God reveals to Jeremiah that his life was in danger...

*Because the LORD revealed their plot to me, I knew it, for at that time he showed me what they were doing. I had been like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter; I did not realize that they had plotted against me, saying, "Let us destroy the tree and its fruit; let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name be remembered no more." But, O LORD Almighty, you who judge righteously and test the heart and mind, let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you I have committed my cause (18-20).*

Reading this, I was struck by the tremendous toll on his life that obedience to God's call required!

I want to follow the Lord, but I don't really want it to be hard. I want people to respect me and like me but that is not always the case, and I live in the United States. I have friends serving Jesus around the world where cultures are hostile to Jesus and Christians and their lives are even in danger.

All of this musing reminds me that there are costs to following Jesus and doing what God would have us to do.

My life is not Jeremiah's. God has not asked me to speak words of judgment to my nation. To the best of my knowledge, my life is not in danger but costs abound. I know people think that my beliefs are foolish. I carry strains with some in my denomination over which I may have to make certain stands that may not be understood or accepted and may cost. Following Jesus costs...

*Lord, help me stand for You no matter the cost. This is my prayer today and every day. Lord, help me be faithful. I cannot do it on my own, help me be faithful. In Jesus' name and for the honor of Your name, I pray. Amen.*

### Tuesday, January 10: Jeremiah 12- Is there mercy with God?...

Is there no mercy with God?

Day after day God's anger has raged against Judah. Would God abandon His people forever? That thought haunted me. If I sin and deserve punishment will God's rightful discipline last for ever?

Like a refreshing stream of cool water during a long arduous hike, the closing words of today's chapter refreshed my soul.

*This is what the LORD says: "As for all my wicked neighbors who seize the inheritance I gave my people Israel, I will uproot them from their lands and I will uproot the house of Judah from among them. But after I uproot them, I will again have compassion and will bring each of them back to his own inheritance and his own country. And if they learn well the ways of my people and swear by my name, saying, 'As surely as the LORD lives'--even as they once taught my people to swear by Baal--then they will be established among my people. But if any nation does not listen, I will completely uproot and destroy it," declares the LORD (14-17).*

To both Judah and her false-god following neighbors God says, *after I uproot them, I will again have compassion and will bring each of them back ... And if they learn well the ways of my people and swear by my name, ...then they will be established among my people.*

There is mercy with God, if we, if anyone, turns to Him.

Turning to God brings mercy... that's what I hear. Repenting and calling out to the Lord opens flood gates of compassion. Ahhh, my heart rejoices.

John, in his first letter in the NT, says this: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1John 1:9).*

Turn or return to God and find mercy...

Confess your sins to the Lord and find forgiveness...

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow... Praise You Father, Son and Holy Spirit because Your love endures forever and Your mercy is without end. Praise You because You always welcome home the prodigal daughters and sons. Praise You for Jesus and His gift of grace and pardon and righteousness... when we turn to Him in faith. Ahh, my heart is refreshed this morning. Thanks be to God. Amen.*

### **Wednesday, January 11: Jeremiah 13- The danger or pride...**

I first noticed 'the word' in verse 9. Something caused it to be highlighted as I read that verse, maybe because it appeared twice in one verse. The word popped up again in verse 17. The word is 'PRIDE.'

I was reminded of the Proverb 16:18: *Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.* Unchecked pride can be a real spiritual problem.

Apparently pride was Judah's problem. *This is what the LORD says: 'In the same way I will ruin the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem (9).* Reading this chapter and remembering the proceeding ones, it seems that Judah had grown pride-full of her place with the Lord. Even though she was living faithlessly, she believed that the Lord would not let harm come to her. As God had protected her in years past, like when Assyria attacked under Hezekiah, God would protect her now.

Writing this it seems to make no sense but I have seen it. People become so 'satisfied' with a skill or ability or a relationship that they assume it means they are impervious to problems. Drivers become so secure in their 'good driving' ability that they grow careless and the next thing you know boom (!) an accident.

I see it in churches where people assume, 'Hey I'm a member. I professed Christ x-years ago'. And yet their present living reflects no relationship with the Lord. I've seen people like this drift from regular worship. Membership on a roll is no a guarantee of eternal security. Only a living relationship with Jesus Christ and the life of faith that results, is.

Pride was a significant part of Judah's fall...

And so the Spirit whispers to me, "Bill, how's your pride? Is it unchecked, growing too much? Remember, *Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.*"

*Lord, help me keep my pride in check... in and through Jesus, I pray. Amen.*

### **Thursday, January 12: Jeremiah 14- Are you listening...**

We think of drought as a weather phenomenon, but for Israel and Judah rain was directly tied to their covenant with the Lord. Lush fertile soil fills parts of Israel, and yet there is no mighty river to feed these crops. The Jordan is actually a small river. Israel is dependant upon rain for crops to grow. God promised, as part of His covenant with them when He brought them into the land, that if they were faithful He would provide the rain they needed. Deuteronomy 11:13-14 reads: *So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today--to love the LORD your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul-- then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and oil.* So for Israel, drought was not merely a weather phenomenon, it was God speaking to them. Drought equaled God's discipline.

This is important background for reading today's chapter. A severe drought, like they are experiencing, carried God's Word of judgment. As God said about them in verse 10, *"They greatly love to wander; they do not restrain their feet. So the LORD does not accept them; he will now remember their wickedness and punish them for their sins."*

We do not have a covenant with God like ancient Israel did. We cannot say, "Oh, my a drought! What have we done to displease God?" But we have other ways to know what God expects of us. First and foremost we have the Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible. Also, God has given to all His people who follow Jesus, the Holy Spirit who is God with us, the comforter and counselor and empowerer of God's people.

It is clear that Judah did not pay attention to God's speaking to them through the drought. The Spirit's whisper to me concerns paying attention, too. Am I (are you) paying attention to God's Word and the nudges of the Holy Spirit or are we disregarding God's communications to us like Judah did? Good question...

*Lord, as I move through today, please help me to listen and pay attention to Your leadings and guidings. Help me to honor and live true to Your Word... In Jesus' name. Amen.*

### **Friday, January 13: Jeremiah 15- A conversation with God...**

Reading this chapter, it became clear that Jeremiah and the Lord were having a conversation about Jeremiah's situation and the people to which he was called. Jeremiah complained, God listened and answered, Jeremiah responds, and then so does God.

It struck me... Jeremiah and God were having a conversation... People in the church talk about having a relationship with God and here we see evidence of one. The Almighty didn't dispense with Jeremiah because he was merely a creature or because he complained about what God was doing to him. No, the Lord engaged Jeremiah. They dialogued.

Too often we think we have to be perfect before God. However, Jeremiah complained and he whined. I hate it when my kids whine. There is no sense in the text that God 'approved' of it. God eventually called Jeremiah to repent. But God didn't dismiss Jeremiah because he spiraled into self pity either. God allowed Jeremiah to speak his peace as he could. God received it and dialoged with Jeremiah, eventually calling Jeremiah to his senses. So God didn't approve but God allowed Jeremiah to work it through and God never stopped loving him in the process. That's RELATIONSHIP!

I realized as I thought this through that the Lord offers the same to you and me. He offers us a relationship. We don't have to be perfect (we can't and won't be!). God simply invites me to be

real and honest. God can handle my foolishness and my sinfulness and my whininess and selfishness. As I am honest with God about the things in my life, God can move me –through love- to better places, more faith-filled places in my life.

Wow, that's wonderful! God loves me and accepts me for who I am...

That's a muse to ponder more throughout today.

*Thank You, Lord God Almighty, for inviting me into a RELATIONSHIP with You. Thank you for inviting me to be real in that relationship. I don't have to be a plastic "Christian" who lives as if I deny feelings and emotions as I live with You. No, You invite me to be honest. Thank You!*

(Take some time to be honed with God right now...)

*I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen*

### **Saturday, January 14: Jeremiah 16- ...**

Are there worse words to hear than what the Lord said to Jeremiah regarding Judah? *I have withdrawn my blessing, my love and my pity from this people* (5). When my eyes lit on this sentence, I stopped reading for a moment, stunned by the weight of these words! *I have withdrawn my blessing, my love and my pity from this people.* Withdrawn blessing and love... my heart stopped. I cannot imagine a worse condition!?!

*Oh, God, may it never be so in my life. May it never be so...*

What grievous action would cause the Lord to do such a thing to His beloved covenant community? God anticipated people asking. *"When you tell these people all this and they ask you, 'Why has the LORD decreed such a great disaster against us? What wrong have we done? What sin have we committed against the LORD our God?' then say to them, 'It is because your fathers forsook me,' declares the LORD, 'and followed other gods and served and worshiped them. They forsook me and did not keep my law. But you have behaved more wickedly than your fathers. See how each of you is following the stubbornness of his evil heart instead of obeying me. So I will throw you out of this land into a land neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you will serve other gods day and night, for I will show you no favor'* (10-13). Generational rejection of the Lord...

But this is not God's last Word. Immediately after the above, God offers hope... *"However, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when men will no longer say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,' but they will say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.' For I will restore them to the land I gave their forefathers* (14-15).

God cannot and will not withdraw from His people forever. *Days are coming," declares the LORD... My take-a-ways for today,*

- 1) If I remain faithful, I will not need to feel the fury of God's withdrawal...
- 2) Even when God punishes me for my sinfulness, days are coming when He will restore His hand of favor and blessing upon me.

*Oh, Lord, I bow to You, my Lord and my God. I stand in awe that You have revealed Yourself to me and I confess my allegiance to You now and forever. I love and serve You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Through Jesus I pray. Amen.*

### **Sunday, January 15, 2012, Sunday Worship**

*If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.*

*If you are reading along with me from the PCOG website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at [office@pcogonline.org](mailto:office@pcogonline.org).*

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.