

## Tuesday, August 18, 2020—Jeremiah 43-46

Obedience to God will always be pleasing to God, but obedience does not guarantee comfort. In fact, obedience to the standards of His Kingdom will always put you at odds with the kingdoms of this world. To obey God, to worship Him in all of life, is a recipe for temporary hardship.

Jeremiah delivered all the words God had given him (43:1), but the people could not believe God did not want them to flee to Egypt. The commander of the army took all the people, including Jeremiah, to Egypt in direct defiance of the words Jeremiah told them. The people were fleeing for supposed safety to a land where Babylon would soon invade and inflict the same destruction just imposed upon Judah.

When Jeremiah spoke in Egypt and accused the people of continued idolatry and a lack of repentance, the people boldly promised to continue their idolatry (44:16-17). “When we stopped burning incense to the goddess, our real problems started,” they said (44:18). They were gauging their trust in God by their comfort and not their obedience. There was no hope for them in God, so God gave them over to their sin (44:25).

Egypt, too, was going to fall. Nothing would stop the invasion of the Babylonians (46:1-24), but God was going to protect and bless those whose hearts were truly His (45:1-4, 46:25-28). In time, God shows Himself to be faithful, good, powerful, and loving. Be faithful, patient, and obedient.

## Monday, August 17, 2020—Jeremiah 40-42

“All dressed up and nowhere to go.” Jeremiah spent years telling his people the plans of God for their discipline and destruction unless they repented. The people eventually grew weary of Jeremiah’s words and imprisoned him. When Jerusalem fell, as Jeremiah predicted, one of the conquering officials freed Jeremiah, gave him provisions, and assured him he could live in safety anywhere in the land (40:1-6). Jeremiah was unthreatened for the first time in years but had nowhere to go.

The newly-appointed leader, Gedaliah, was assassinated by Ishmael, an Ammonite operative, and Ishmael imprisoned some of the Jews. Johanan, the commander of the Jewish forces, came and freed those captives, and Ishmael fled. They made plans to flee to Egypt to avoid oppressions by the Babylonians but sought Jeremiah’s counsel first.

Johanan and the people committed to doing whatever the Lord said. After 10 days (42:7), Jeremiah returned to them with an answer. They were to stay in Israel, as God had said earlier, and find protection and provision from God under the Babylonians. If they fled to Egypt, they would be walking into the destruction and death they were trying to avoid.

Jeremiah still had a purpose. He was a source of wisdom and direction for a devastated people. The people had purpose. God wanted them to flourish in their homeland. The path to prosperity was prayer, patience, and obedience. In those moments when direction is uncertain or personal value seems low, God remains in control and worthy of worship. Living for His glory in whatever situation is anyone’s highest purpose.

### Sunday, August 16, 2020—Jeremiah 37-39

The stresses of life can produce tunnel vision. Either by choice or through some physiological process, the field of vision narrows to focus on what is most important. That narrowing means things in the peripheral field, which may also be important, are not seen or considered.

When Judah was fighting for its life, Zedekiah became king. Like his predecessors, he did not pay attention to the words of Yahweh that Jeremiah the prophet was speaking. His tunnel vision focused on other matters he considered vital. Zedekiah did, however, send word to Jeremiah to request prayer (37:3). He would not give his personal attention to prayer for survival and provision, but he knew Jeremiah could do that.

God's word came to Jeremiah and reaffirmed what He had continually said—the Babylonians would destroy the city. The frustrations of the day and the growing despair in the city put everyone on edge. Under false charges, the officials put Jeremiah in jail. The king allowed him to be relocated, but Jeremiah was eventually thrown in a cistern. Rather than deal with personal repentance, the people took out their frustration on Jeremiah.

Jeremiah told Zedekiah to surrender to Babylon (38:17) so his life would be spared. Instead, Zedekiah fled, was captured, and lost his sons and his eyesight. His tunnel vision led to a loss of vision altogether and to great loss of life. Ebed-melech, however, a foreigner, received great blessing because he trusted in God and obeyed (39:15-19).

Pray for clear vision, listening ears, and obedient faith.

### Saturday, August 15, 2020—Jeremiah 33-36

In the early days of telephone usage, telephone numbers were actually a combination of numbers and letters. On *Hee Haw*, Junior Samples was famous for his fictitious used-car lot and number—BR-549. If Jeremiah were to share God's phone number, he might say it is JER-333.

In Jeremiah 33, God invites Jeremiah, while Jeremiah is in confinement, to call to Him, and He will tell him great and unsearchable things he doesn't know (33:3). God wants His people to call out to Him. God wants to communicate with His people. He is a relational God.

He will not always share good news—as was the case here. There was going to be difficulty ahead, but He would one day restore (33:11). The people would understand that Yahweh was the source of their righteousness and revitalization (33:16). He longs for people who, like the Recabites (35:1-19), will hear the desires of the one who leads them and want nothing more than to obey and please Him. He despises those who claim to be His and yet are not people of integrity (34:1-22).

God wants His people to call to Him. God wants His people to listen. When they reject His word to them (36:1-32), He will not be silent or change His plan. He won't force obedience or agreement, but He finds ways to make clear who He is and what He is doing to glorify Himself.

Thank God for giving us relationship with Him through Christ. Walk in faith and

obedience with Him.

Friday, August 14, 2020—Jeremiah 30-32

In Jeremiah's day few people were literate, so those who could read and write were privileged and carried great influence. God told Jeremiah to write down what He was saying as a way of preserving His words of judgment and promise. Future generations needed to know how God had called, disciplined, and restored His people. As a result of Jeremiah's obedience, we have the record of His ministry and God's words today.

Those in exile were experiencing physical and emotional turmoil, but one day God was going to bring His people back and reestablish them. He was with them in their misery, and He would save them from it. "So you will be my people, and I will be your God" (30:22). There was coming a day when the priests and the people would have abundance and joy (31:14).

Why was God telling them this? This was a guarantee for the future to sustain them in the present. If God was going to be celebrated in the future, the people could celebrate Him in the present. He would not change. Only their circumstances would change. They would see that worship is based on His character and faithfulness and not circumstances.

God said His restoration work would be transformational. Instead of on stone, He would write His truth on their hearts (31:31-34). To show his faith in God's promises, Jeremiah bought a field and had the deed stored (32:1-44). He would have claim to land that was lost and reclaimed.

Thank God for the Word that proclaims His faithfulness.

Thursday, August 13, 2020—Jeremiah 27-29

Because God speaks truth, His words apply to all people—those who follow Him and those who do not. The truth is no respecter of faith, background, or opinion. Truth is truth.

Jeremiah was a prophet for the people of Judah, but he also spoke to envoys from Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon. Those nations needed to know what God was doing as the Babylonians invaded and created chaos for everyone. God did not have to explain His motives, but He did so to show His sovereignty and grace (27:1-22).

Another prophet, Hananiah, proclaimed a message very different from Jeremiah's and that of all the prophets that preceded him. Hananiah said within two years everything would be restored, and Jeremiah said he hoped Hananiah was right, but the people would only know whether Hananiah was a real prophet if his words came true (28:9). Two months later Hananiah was dead. Two years later the captivity was only beginning.

Jeremiah wrote a letter to the exiles, and its content may be the most famous of all the book. God told the exiles to prepare for a long stay in Babylon, but God knew what He was doing. He was working for their prosperity and giving them true hope for the future (29:11-13). They were to build families and homes and seek the prosperity of their new land until the time of their captivity was over. God wanted to bless them, even in their exile, to demonstrate His lovingkindness and the power of faith and obedience

regardless of circumstances.

Wednesday, August 12, 2020—Jeremiah 24-26

One of God's most comforting names is Jehovah Jireh. He is the self-existent One who will provide. The name "Jireh" is a future-tense form the verb for seeing. In other words, God is able to provide because He sees the future and knows the need in advance. He has "forward vision."

As Jerusalem crumbled and Judah fell, God gave Jeremiah a vision of two baskets of figs—one with ripe figs and another with bad figs. God said the exiles going to Babylon were the ripe figs. He would work in them and provide for them, and they would return to Him with all their heart (24:7). What seemed bad with present-tense vision—the destruction of the city and removal from the homeland—was going to be a blessing in the end. Only God can see those reality and provide to make them true.

Some years earlier, Jeremiah told the people God was going to remove them from Judah and send them to Babylon for 70 years (25:11). This was God's judgment against their sin, and He would pour out His wrath on the nations as well (25:15-38). His ability to see the future and His desire for clarity moved God to have Jeremiah speak these truths.

The people were, not surprisingly, disturbed by Jeremiah's prophecies and reacted violently against him (26:8-11). An appeal to the word of God through the mouth of another prophet Micah (26:17-19) saved Jeremiah's life and humbled the people before him.

Thank God for His ability to see, provide, and strengthen.