

Monday, August 19, 2019—Jeremiah 47-49

“He’s really cleaning house.” The new boss comes in and makes a statement from the beginning about his leadership and direction. He fires or reassigns everyone from the top to the bottom as he sees fit. To accomplish his goals, he has the right to do what he pleases.

When God brought discipline on Judah, He wasn’t going to stop with them. He was going to use the opportunity of an invading Babylonian army to bring discipline and judgment on all of Judah’s neighbors. God had sent His sword on an errand (47:7), and the sword would not return to its sheath until the task was complete.

God was bringing about this judgment because He is just. He did not discipline and destroy because He loves bloodshed and suffering. On the contrary, He said His heart was broken for the people of Moab (48:31). He did not enjoy the task, but His justice compelled Him to act. Good judges cannot allow injustice to last. A jealous God will not allow people to give the worship He deserves to another god forever. He had to act.

God was aware of the suffering this would cause, and He promised to look after the widows and orphans (49:11). He also promised to restore many of these people to their homelands after the discipline was done (49:6, 39). He was just, yet He was also gracious.

Thank God today for His holiness and His expectation that His people live solely devoted to Him. Pray for growing holiness in your life.

Sunday, August 18, 2019—Jeremiah 43-46

“I told you so.” Hearing those words is usually the result of not heeding advice and suffering the consequences. Saying those words is usually accompanied with a sense of superiority for being correct.

God had told His people not to go to Egypt, and Jeremiah had faithfully communicated that message. Many people discarded the advice and fled to Egypt, taking Jeremiah with them. While at the perimeter of Pharaoh’s palace, Jeremiah told the people God would allow Babylon to invade Egypt and set up the royal

canopy on those steps. They had fled Nebuchadnezzar but would face him nonetheless. God was, in a sense, saying, "I told you so." Rather than facing him as deported captives, they would face him as foreign enemies. This would not end well (43:1-44:30)

The people were paying the price for their generations of idolatry and their overt rebellion against God. Despite their being chosen by God, they would not enjoy its blessing. In contrast, Baruch would experience God's protection and blessing. He would suffer for a little while, but his obedience would guarantee his long-term survival (45:1-5).

The grace and mercy of God are far deeper, wider, longer, and higher than anyone can imagine. Through Jeremiah, He had prophesied His punishing His people, but He also promised His presence, care, and deliverance (46:27-28). One day, the exile of punishment would be over, and He would restore them to peace and prosperity.

Thank God for communicating clearly through His Word and His Spirit.  
Pray for daily obedience for His glory and blessing.

Saturday, August 17, 2019—Jeremiah 40-42

Some see the idea of surrendering to Jesus and walking with Him as a life of drudgery and slavery. There would be no fun. There would be no adventure. He forces a list of dos and don'ts that make life boring.

Jeremiah's freedom in Jeremiah 40 is a much better picture. While the chaos of invasion swirled around him, Jeremiah found himself free from chains. The captain of the guard offered him options on where to live and thrive and gave him food and money (40:1-6). Everyone else marched away a captive or fought to their death. Jeremiah was alive and free. To be sure, he remained under the rule of Babylon. Christians, too, find themselves living in the realm of this world with the unwelcome influence of Satan, yet they are fully alive and free in Christ. Those without Christ are like the guerilla bands in the countryside. They look for ways to overthrow the earthly powers God has put in place rather than repenting and surrendering fully to Him and His plans (40:7-41:18).

For some, the chaos of life will finally lead them to evaluation and repentance. Some came to Jeremiah and asked him to pray. They wanted to know what to do and where to go (42:3). He told them then what He tells anyone now. Find peace and safety in His presence (42:11). Knowing He is near guarantees His mercy and wisdom no matter the circumstances.

Praise God for life, safety, and abundance in Christ alone.

Friday, August 16, 2019—Jeremiah 37-39

When God's people live by God's standards, they will rebel against the standards and kingdoms of the world. What Jesus describes in Matthew 5-7 is a counter-cultural life which actually benefits the culture and brings glory to God. The culture, however, may not always affirm those choices.

Jeremiah prophesied during an extremely turbulent time in the life of Jerusalem and Judah. At one point, the Egyptians were threatening from the south while the Babylonians were continually threatening from the north. When Jeremiah innocently went outside the city to examine the property he bought, some accused him of defecting to the Babylonians. He was going to see the place where God would restore his family in the future, but the ignorant and short-sighted incorrectly concluded he was working against his own people. While he was actually acting in faith that God was going to do great things for Judah, he went to jail for it (37:11-16).

Jeremiah told the people things they didn't want to hear. He told the king to surrender to Babylon even though he feared he would die (38:19). Repentance requires trusting God's ways and not our own.

Obedience requires trusting as well. In fact, obedience is simply continual repentance, trusting God and denying self daily. Jeremiah saw Jerusalem fall and a foreign king free him from jail. A foreigner saw God protect him and provide for him because of obedience (39:11-18). God looks at the condition of the heart and blesses those who are His.

Praise God for the security of His sovereignty and the rewards of faithfulness.

Thursday, August 15, 2019—Jeremiah 33-36

Readers of mystery writers like Agatha Christie or Arthur Conan Doyle are amazed at the ability of authors to write such compelling, complex stories. Even after the mystery is solved, the reader has difficulty grasping how all the details fit together. On subsequent readings, the plot begins to make sense, and the amazement at the author's ability grows.

God told His people to seek Him, and He would tell them remarkable secrets about what was coming (33:3). In a unique way, God would forgive, heal, and restore (33:6). "Then this city will bring me joy, glory, and honor before all the nations of the earth! The people of the world will see the good I do for my people and will tremble with awe!" (33:9). The mystery would be revealed, and all would be amazed.

God was going to do this remarkable work not because the people deserved it or earned it but because of His unbreakable covenant with David (33:19-26). He promised King Zedekiah he would die in peace though in captivity (34:1-7), something only a sovereign God could do.

The mystery would include God's disciplining His people because of their refusal to live by the covenant (33:18, 8-22). They did not listen and obey, unlike the Recabites (35:16), who obeyed their ancestor despite the hardship it presented. King Jehoiakim boldly refused to listen to God and burned the scrolls as they were read to him (36:23), but God made clear this would not prevent His discipline from coming (36:27-32).

Praise God for His mysterious power to discipline and restore.

Wednesday, August 14, 2019—Jeremiah 30-32

"Do you promise? Pinky promise?" Children have a variety of ways to assure the fulfillment of pledge. One of the most tangible is the interlocking of the pinky fingers of the partners in the covenant.

God has a more powerful way to assure the completion of a guarantee. If He speaks it, He will do it. His word is His bond. His character is the only assurance His people need. He told Jeremiah and His people that He would

restore them, so they could count on it (30:1-3). They had to go through discipline, but they would see their health restored and their wounds healed (30:17). The restoration would be a time of joy and celebration with song and dancing in Jerusalem (31:1-14).

This revival would be remarkable, and the people of God would readily admit the discipline of God was necessary and deserved (31:18). Their admission would make the renewal all the more appreciated and celebrated. Being God's people would have fresh meaning. Having Jerusalem and the Temple would have deeper significance. The covenant would now be on their hearts and in their minds rather than on tablets of stone (31:31-34). Their peace and freedom would never end.

Despite the siege by Babylon, Jeremiah bought land and hid the deed. He was showing his confidence that one day God would restore His people, and Jeremiah would have proof of his property (32:15). Praise the God for whom nothing is too difficult (32:17). Live in the power and peace of His love and wisdom (32:18-19). Celebrate the guarantee of promises.

Tuesday, August 13, 2019—Jeremiah 27-29

When a nurse prepares a patient for an injection, the nurse usually instructs the patient to relax. "Relax? How can I relax when you're approaching me with a sharp object that will bring certain pain?" The injection is inevitable. Relaxing lessens immediate and prevents further pain.

God was moving to discipline His people and the nations around them. If they surrendered to Babylon, they would avoid unnecessary pain—and likely death—and be able to experience the provision and cleansing available through God's grace and mercy in exile. Jeremiah urged the king and the people and the nations around them to surrender (27:1-22).

Another prophet, Hananiah, stood before the people and said God would end this misery far sooner than Jeremiah had predicted (28:1-4), and Jeremiah responded that he hoped Hananiah was right. Hananiah, however, lived under the burden of proof. If God did not restore the people within two years, he would be

proved a false prophet (28:9). In turn, Jeremiah predicted Hananiah would die within the year, and he did (28:17).

The exile would indeed be long, so God spoke through Jeremiah to His people. His plans for them were for prosperity, not harm, so he wanted them to prosper in exile—to build homes, cultivate land, grow families (29:1-11). After 70 years, He would restore them, and He wanted them to flourish so He would have a robust remnant to bring home.

Thank God for discipline and grace that see beyond our comfort to the joy and freedom of holiness.