



DAYBREAK

2 Kings, Nahum, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Lamentations



<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 1:1-18	<input type="checkbox"/> Zephaniah 2:4-15	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 29:1-32
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 2:1-25	<input type="checkbox"/> Zephaniah 3:1-20	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 30:1-24
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 3:1-27	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 1:1-19	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 31:1-40
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 4:1-17	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 2:1 — 3:5	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 32:1-25
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 4:18-44	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 3:6 — 4:4	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 32:26-44
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 5:1-27	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 4:5-31	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 33:1-26
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 6:1-23	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 5:1-31	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 34:1-22
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 6:24 — 7:20	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 6:1-30	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 35:1-19
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 8:1-15	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 7:1 — 8:3	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 36:1-32
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 8:16-29	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 8:4 — 9:1	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 37:1 — 38:28
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 9:1-37	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 9:2-26	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 39:1-18
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 10:1-36	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 10:1-25	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 40:1-16
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 11:1-21	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 11:1-23	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 41:1-18
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 12:1-21	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 12:1-17	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 42:1 — 43:13
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 13:1-25	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 13:1-27	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 44:1 — 45:5
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 14:1-29	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 14:1-22	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 46:1 — 47:7
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 15:1-38	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 15:1-21	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 48:1-47
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 16:1-20	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 16:1-21	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 49:1-22
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 17:1-23	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 17:1-27	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 49:23-39
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 17:24-41	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 18:1-23	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 50:1-46
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 18:1-37	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 19:1-15	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 51:1-24
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 19:1-37	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 20:1-18	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 51:25-64
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 20:1-21	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 21:1-14	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 52:1-34
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 21:1-26	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 22:1-23	<input type="checkbox"/> Lamentations 1:1-22
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 22:1-20	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 22:24 — 23:8	<input type="checkbox"/> Lamentations 2:1-22
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 23:1-30	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 23:9-40	<input type="checkbox"/> Lamentations 3:1-38
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 23:31 — 24:20	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 24:1-10	<input type="checkbox"/> Lamentations 3:39-66
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 25:1-30	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 25:1-38	<input type="checkbox"/> Lamentations 4:1-22
<input type="checkbox"/> Nahum 1:1 — 2:13	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 26:1-24	<input type="checkbox"/> Lamentations 5:1-22
<input type="checkbox"/> Nahum 3:1-19	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 27:1-22	
<input type="checkbox"/> Zephaniah 1:1 — 2:3	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 28:1-17	

Daybreak is a personal Bible study continuum for the high school and adult levels. Scripture references are taken from the King James Version of the Bible. A companion series of Sunday school lessons, titled Discovery, is also available. All of the material is available on our website, as well as in printed form. The print version is designed to be stored in a binder; subsequent modules can then be easily inserted. Daybreak is an official publication of the Apostolic Faith Church. All rights are reserved.



Overview for 2 Kings

Purpose: To give the history of the kings from Ahaziah (Northern Kingdom) and Jehoram (Southern Kingdom) until each kingdom fell and was brought into captivity. The book also demonstrates God's pursuit of His people through the message of His prophets.

Author: Tradition says that Jeremiah wrote the Book of Kings, perhaps with the help of other prophets. Some scholars suggest that Ezra and the priests compiled the information included in the book.

Date Written: Internal evidence indicates that at least the final chapters were written sometime after 561 B.C. and before 536 B.C.

Setting: The Book of 2 Kings begins approximately eighty years after the Kingdom was divided. It covers the final 130-year period before the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel to Assyria in 722 B.C., and then another 136 years until the fall of the Southern Kingdom of Judah to the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

Key People: Elijah, Elisha, and kings of Judah and Israel.

Summary: The Books of 1 and 2 Kings were originally one book. The first time the book was known to have been separated into two was in the Septuagint, which was the earliest translation into Greek of the Old Testament. The first time a division is found in the Hebrew Bible is in the Rabbinic Bible of 1517. The time frame of both the books together is about 450 years.

The Book of 2 Kings relates how Israel and Judah were led into captivity. During this sinful time of Israel's history, God raised up prophets to proclaim

His message and be His spokesmen. Elijah was one of the first prophets mentioned in this book, and he trained Elisha to be his successor. Chapter 2 records Elijah's final meeting with Elisha. Following this, Elisha's ministry lasted fifty years. He had a great deal of influence upon the kings of his day, and although he did not approve of what they did, he was continually sent by God to their rescue.

Judah survived for more than a century after the fall of the Northern Kingdom, but paid tribute to Assyria during most of that time. There were only two good kings in Judah's final years: Hezekiah and Josiah. Without question, Josiah was the finest of Judah's kings and he instituted thorough religious reform (2 Kings 23:25 and 2 Chronicles 34-35). During his reform and repairing of the Temple, a book of the law was found which inspired a revival in Judah.

At the end of Josiah's reign, the Assyrian capital, Nineveh, fell to Babylonia in 612 B.C. Egypt then went north to aid what was left of Assyria. King Josiah of Judah resisted their march through Israelite territory and was killed at the Battle of Megiddo (2 Kings 23:29).

Judah became sandwiched between two super powers, Egypt and Babylonia. The Jewish people began to rely on both nations, and seldom sought the Lord for guidance. Finally, Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah in 605 B.C. After Judah made several attempts for independence, Babylon decided to completely destroy it. The important leaders were killed, and the rest of the people were exiled, except for the very poor who were left to tend the crops. The Temple was burned, and all its furnishings taken away to Babylon (2 Kings 24 and 25).

Timeline

See “The Divided Kingdom” four-page timeline included in this unit.

Outline

*Hannah's Bible Outlines used by permission per WORDsearch.
A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.*

I. The reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah (1:1 — 17:41)

- A. Ahaziah of Israel (1:1 — 2:25)
- B. Jehoram of Israel (3:1 — 8:15)
- C. Jehoram of Judah (8:16-24)
- D. Ahaziah of Judah (8:25-29)
- E. Jehu of Israel (9:1 — 10:36)
- F. Athaliah of Judah (11:1-20)
- G. Jehoash of Judah (11:21 — 12:21)
- H. Jehoahaz of Israel (13:1-9)
- I. Jehoash of Israel (13:10-25)
- J. Amaziah of Judah (14:1-22)
- K. Jeroboam II of Israel (14:23-29)
- L. Uzziah of Judah (15:1-7)
- M. Zechariah of Israel (15:8-12)
- N. Shallum of Israel (15:13-16)
- O. Menahem of Israel (15:17-22)
- P. Pekahiah of Israel (15:23-26)
- Q. Pekah of Israel (15:27-31)
- R. Jotham of Judah (15:32-38)
- S. Ahaz of Judah (16:1-20)
- T. Hoshea of Israel (17:1-41)

II. The reigns of the kings of Judah (18:1 — 25:30)

- A. Hezekiah (18:1 — 20:21)
- B. Manasseh (21:1-18)
- C. Amon (21:19-26)
- D. Josiah (22:1 — 23:30)
- E. Jehoahaz (23:31-35)
- F. Jehoiakim (23:36 — 24:7)
- G. Jehoiachin (24:8-16)
- H. Zedekiah (24:17 — 25:30)



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And he said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron, is it not because there is no God in Israel to enquire of his word? therefore thou shalt not come down off that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.” (2 Kings 1:16)

The other day in a department store, I saw a woman I took to be a sales person and asked about a specific product. She looked at me rather blankly and said, “I’m not a store employee.” With an apology, I went on my way a little embarrassed. Perhaps you’ve done the same thing. Or maybe you have been the recipient of such a question. In either case, it can be a slightly awkward situation, and the person needing an answer must continue to seek for it.

In today’s text, King Ahaziah was on his death-bed, and he turned to a false god to inquire whether he would live or die. Confusion about a clerk in a department store is an innocent error, but this wicked king knew better when he made this deliberate choice to consult Baal-zebub. As a result, God sent Elijah to ask the question, “Is it not because there is no God in Israel to enquire of his word?” (2 Kings 1:16) He then prophesied Ahaziah’s death because of his sin.

Every day we need answers for situations that face us. Some are inconsequential. A few are weighty enough that an incorrect answer could change the very course of our lives. King Ahaziah’s question was a matter of life and death. Whether our questions are big or small, who do we ask about them? Do we take our concerns to the Lord? Or sometimes, like Ahaziah, do we seek out other sources for answers to our problems? Though there is nothing wrong in seeking godly advice from fellow Christians, we must not fail to bring our questions to God in prayer. God wants to show Himself strong on our behalf! When we take our concerns to Him, it helps us draw closer to Him, and it also gives Him the opportunity, through answering our prayers, to build our faith and bring glory to Himself. God is near today, just waiting for us to ask. Let’s go to the right source for our answers!

BACKGROUND

Eighty years before the close of the Book of 1 Kings, the country of Israel had been split into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. The Book of 2 Kings opens as Ahaziah, who was as wicked as his father,

Ahab, began his reign over Israel. Jehoshaphat was king of Judah. More information regarding Ahaziah is found in 2 Chronicles 20:35-37. This gives the account of Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah forming an alliance to construct ships to go to Tarshish. The prophet Eliezer told Jehoshaphat that because of Ahaziah’s wickedness, their venture would not be fruitful, but the ships would be broken. This prophecy was true and came to pass.

Ahaziah reigned only two years over Israel (1 Kings 22:51) and then suffered an accident which eventually killed him. The Book of 2 Kings provides the account of this accident and follows with Elijah’s final confrontation with a king of Israel before the prophet was taken up to Heaven.

After Ahaziah’s accident, he wished to know if he would live or die, so he chose to seek answers from Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron. Baal-zebub was a different god than Baal, the Canaanite god that Ahab and Jezebel worshiped. The temple for Baal-zebub was in a city named Ekron, and this god was believed to have prophetic power. Some Bible scholars say that the word Baal-zebub (which meant “Lord of the Flies,” insects that bring disease and death) was a purposeful distortion by the Jews of the name Baal-zebul (meaning “lord prince”), who was considered a god of health and life.

Ahaziah showed his complete disregard for the true God of Israel when he chose to call upon this false god for answers. Consequently, God pronounced a judgment of death upon him. Elijah confronted Ahaziah as he had previously confronted Ahab, his father. At first, the message was delivered by Ahaziah’s servants. When Ahaziah found out that Elijah had sent the message, he directed a captain and fifty men to retrieve him.

The first two captains and their bands of fifty soldiers each seemed to have as much disdain for God and His prophet as Ahaziah did himself. Fire from God was sent as punishment for their attitudes. The third captain who came to Elijah was a wiser man than his predecessors and demonstrated an attitude of respect and humility. His life and those of his company were spared.

Ahaziah died as God had said he would, and his brother Jehoram (another of Ahab’s sons) became king of Israel.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah
 - A. Ahaziah of Israel

1. Ahaziah's death (1:1-18)
 - a. Ahaziah's accident and inquiry (1:1-2)
 - b. Elijah's message to Ahaziah (1:3-8)
 - c. Elijah's confrontation with Ahaziah (1:9-16)
 - d. Ahaziah's death (1:17-18)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Elijah was commanded by God to pronounce a message of judgment on King Ahaziah. What was the message?

2. Based on their actions, what was the attitude of Ahaziah and those in his command toward both Elijah and God?

3. In what manner should we approach God when we need an answer to a question?

CONCLUSION

As we go through our daily lives, we can purpose to take all of our matters to the Lord in prayer. Big or small, God will work for us when we choose to seek Him first!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on.”
(2 Kings 2:6)

For years in the 1800s, inventors had been working with various types of electric lights. However, Thomas Edison wanted to make an electric light that was practical for homes and offices and had the potential of replacing gas lights. For two years he looked for a suitable material that could be used as the filament, and his search included sending agents to the Amazon jungles and Japan’s forests, and experimenting with thousands of materials. In 1879, he concluded that a filament would last longer if it was in an oxygen-free bulb. After many failures, Edison made a light bulb with carbonized thread as the filament. In December of that year, news of Edison’s breakthrough development of an electric incandescent light amazed the world. His persistence generated a life-changing product.

In today’s text, Elisha’s determination to follow his master exhibited the same type of persistence. The Prophet Elijah, whom Elisha had served for seven or eight years, asked him not just once, but three times, to wait and not follow him. This instruction was not given because Elijah did not want the younger man with him, but rather, it appeared to be a test of Elisha’s devotion. However, Elisha was determined that he was going to stay with his master. He was not going to leave him; he determined to follow him relentlessly.

The sons of the prophets also tried to discourage Elisha from following Elijah, suggesting he stay back and observe from afar. Yet, Elisha was not deterred, and ultimately, his determination and devotion were rewarded. He received a double portion of Elijah’s spirit because he persevered and followed all the way.

We can learn by observing the perseverance of Elisha. His determination should encourage us to persist in our personal walk with the Lord. At times we may face spiritual setbacks and obstacles, and we may be tempted to pull back and only “view from afar,” as the sons of the prophets did. Yet, we have the opportunity to receive blessings by exhibiting devotion and faithfulness in our lives. By following the Lord and staying with Him to the end, we have His promise to be with us and help us, and eventually to give us eternity

with Him. Like Elisha, we must persist. It will be well worth the effort.

BACKGROUND

After the historical account of the rulers of Israel given in chapter 1, this chapter of 2 Kings details Elijah’s departure from the earth and the commencement of Elisha’s ministry.

Elisha had been Elijah’s servant and apprentice for about seven or eight years, and God had revealed that Elijah would be taken to Heaven. The sons of the prophets were groups of students who were in training. Schools for the prophets had been started in the time of Samuel, and the students apparently lived in selected cities, including Gilgal, Bethel, and Jericho. Perhaps Elijah visited these places on his last day to encourage them.

The Hebrew words *pi shenayim*, translated *double portion*, mean “two parts,” not double the quantity.¹ Elisha’s request for a double portion was a reference to Deuteronomy 21:15-17, which granted two shares of the inheritance to the oldest son who would become the family leader. At this time, students of distinguished teachers were commonly described as their children. Because Elisha had been called to become the leader of the prophets in Elijah’s place, he wanted to claim this inheritance of “a double portion of his spiritual influence”² so he could fulfill his role. Granting Elisha’s request was not in Elijah’s power; the answer had to come from God, but it was promised if he saw Elijah go to Heaven.

A fiery chariot and horses separated Elijah from Elisha, and a whirlwind caught up Elijah. The only other people who have left this world without dying were Enoch and Jesus after His resurrection. Elisha saw Elijah go, and his expression, “My father, my father,” acknowledged Elijah as his spiritual father and mentor.

The mantle worn by Elijah was probably made of sheepskin. That God directed its fall to where Elisha could pick it up indicated that Elisha had received the double portion he had requested and confirmed that Elisha was Elijah’s successor. Elisha tore off his own clothes, perhaps as an indication of his grief, but the putting on of Elijah’s mantle could have been symbolic of stepping into his new role.

The sons of the prophets, who were watching from afar, had seen Elijah strike the Jordan River with his mantle, and had observed that the river had parted. As Elisha stood by the river and smote the water with the mantle, God confirmed to Elisha and also the

watching sons of the prophets that Elisha had received His anointing. The prophets accepted him as their leader. When they asked to look for Elijah's body, Elisha told them not to go, but they insisted. The futility of their search further confirmed Elisha's leadership position.

The miracles God promptly worked through Elisha authenticated his position as Elijah's successor. At Jericho, contaminated water was cleansed by using salt. On the road to Bethel, mocking youths were punished. The word translated *children* can refer to people in their twenties or thirties, and these must have been old enough to be accountable for their actions. Some Bible scholars believe these were young men who were demonstrating great disrespect for God, as shown by their dishonor of His messenger. Bethel was the Northern Kingdom's center of idolatry, and the people of the area had a disdainful attitude toward God and His prophets. Elisha pronounced a curse, but God sent the punishment.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah
 - A. Ahaziah of Israel
 - 2. Elijah's departure (2:1-11)
 - 3. Elisha's ministry commenced (2:12-25)
 - a. The mantle of Elijah (2:12-14)
 - b. The search for Elijah (2:15-18)
 - c. The purification of Jericho's water (2:19-22)
 - d. The judgment on Elisha's scoffers (2:23-25)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What was required of Elisha in order for him to receive a double portion?

2. What does his desire for a double portion of the spirit of Elijah indicate about Elisha?

3. What steps can we take in our lives to exhibit the kind of faithful determination that Elisha had?

CONCLUSION

Even though some around us may try to discourage us, perseverance with God never goes unnoticed or unrewarded.

NOTES

1. Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Bible Commentary*, e-Sword, 2 Kings 2:9.
2. Ibid.



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may enquire of the LORD by him? And one of the king of Israel’s servants answered and said, Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah.” (2 Kings 3:11)

Years ago, when I was a young Christian, a situation developed that caused disagreement between some acquaintances of mine. As I listened to the differing opinions, I found myself getting caught up in the conflict and, before long, I realized it was having a negative effect on me spiritually.

Thankfully, I chose to go to my pastor for counsel, instead of letting wrong attitudes fester and grow in my heart. My pastor gave me sound Biblical advice about praying and trusting the Lord, and assured me that God would intervene and take care of this particular situation if we prayed about it. My pastor’s encouraging words that day caused me to search my heart and resolve to detach myself from the matter. Many times over the years, when other situations have surfaced, I have remembered my pastor’s wise counsel, and I have learned to put my trust in the One who can truly resolve any conflict or circumstance that comes my way.

In today’s text, when Israel’s armies reached a place in the desert where there was no water for them and their livestock, Jehoram was convinced that God had put them in this position so they would be defeated by the Moabites. Jehoshaphat, a godly king, asked to consult with a prophet to get counsel from the Lord. When he heard that Elisha was in their midst, Jehoshaphat was encouraged because “the word of the LORD is with him” (verse 12). He knew God’s prophet would be the person to deliver God’s message.

Elisha told the kings to dig the valley full of ditches, and God would supply water in the ditches for them to drink. With Jehoshaphat’s encouragement, the kings heeded Elisha’s advice, and they were spared from certain disaster. Not only were they given water to drink, but when the Moabites saw the water, they thought it was blood from the armies of Israel, Judah, and Edom fighting against each other. The Moabites then came to plunder the slain, and were attacked and defeated by Jehoram’s coalition.

To overcome and prosper in our Christian walk, it is essential that we get our guidance from God’s Word and prayer. At times it can be spiritually beneficial

to seek godly counsel from a pastor, Sunday school teacher, or faithful brother or sister in Christ. As we learn to seek out Biblical counsel, God will guide and direct us through every circumstance, and we will triumphantly prevail over any obstacle the devil may try to use against us.

BACKGROUND

Jehoram was the son of Ahab and Jezebel, and he reigned in Israel from 852 to 841 B.C. Although he attempted to eradicate Baal worship, Jehoram continued to endorse the sins of Jeroboam by sanctioning the worship of idols. When the Northern Kingdom of Israel split from the Southern Kingdom of Judah, Jeroboam, who ruled the Northern Kingdom, was instrumental in turning the hearts of Israel away from God by instituting the worship of golden calves, and discouraging the people from traveling to Jerusalem to worship the true God. When Jehoram became king, he “cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam” (verse 3).

During Ahab’s reign, Moab was controlled by Israel and paid annual tribute of 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams. After Ahab’s death, Mesha, the king of Moab, rebelled against Israel and refused to pay tribute. Jehoram chose to go to war with Moab to try to bring them into submission, and he persuaded Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah (also a vassal nation of Israel), to join with him in battle. In turn, Jehoshaphat enlisted the help of Edom, a nation controlled by Judah.

Jehoram chose to take the longer route to Moab, traveling through Judah to the southern end of the Dead Sea and along the northwestern border of Edom. This was perhaps done to avoid the more fortified cities in the northern portion of Moab, or to circumvent the rougher terrain they would have encountered had they taken the shorter route. The usual water supply that they had counted on had dried up and after seven days of traveling this circuitous route, the armies ran out of water. Jehoram lost hope and blamed God for their predicament, but Jehoshaphat turned to the Lord for help. When Jehoshaphat asked for a prophet of the Lord to consult with, the three kings were referred to Elisha, who apparently had been led by the Lord to be in the area at this time.

Elisha had little regard for Jehoram because of his affinity with idol worship and his obvious lack of faith in God. However, because Jehoshaphat was a godly king, Elisha agreed to seek God’s help for their dilemma. The Hebrew word for *minstrel* signified a player on a stringed instrument such as a harp or lute (small

guitar). In Old Testament times, music sometimes accompanied a prophetic message. While the minstrel played, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Elisha, and he told the kings to fill the valley with ditches and the Lord would provide water. Elisha also told the kings that God would give them victory over the Moabites, and that they were to completely destroy every Moabite city, cut down every good tree, plug up every well, and ruin every good piece of land with stones to make it unsuitable for farming. The kings obeyed Elisha's instructions and the next day, at the time of the morning sacrifice, the ditches were filled with water from the south even though there had not been a local rainstorm.

When Mesha, the king of Moab, heard that the kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom were going to fight against his people, he ordered all who were able to put on armor, from the youngest to the oldest, to prepare to fight. As the Moabites stood at their border and viewed the valley where the Israelite coalition encamped, they did not know that God had sent water—they expected to see a dry valley. As they looked at the water flowing through the ditches with the morning sunrays shining down, it looked like blood. They concluded that the three armies had turned on each other and self-destructed. The Moabites left their secure place in the mountains and went to the valley to raid the “defeated” armies, only to find themselves attacked by the Israelite coalition. The Moabite army fled, and Jehoram's coalition pursued them, fulfilling Elisha's instruction to utterly destroy Moab.

In desperation, the king of Moab offered his oldest son as a burnt sacrifice to his god, Chemosh, to gain his favor. This horrific sacrifice was done in full view of the Israelite coalition, and the Bible says, “There was great indignation against Israel” (verse 27). While Bible scholars are not sure exactly what it meant by this phrase, the situation caused Israel to withdraw, and they never regained control of Moab as a tributary nation.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah
 - B. Jehoram of Israel
 1. The character of Jehoram's reign (3:1-3)
 2. The revolt of Moab (3:4-27)
 - a. The rebellion of Moab (3:4-12)
 - b. The counsel of Elisha (3:13-20)
 - c. The defeat of Moab (3:21-27)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. According to Elisha's instructions, what did Jehoram's coalition have to do to receive water?

2. Why do you think Jehoshaphat was anxious to speak to a prophet of the Lord when the armies were faced with the prospect of no water?

3. What are some impossible situations that God has resolved in your life or the life of someone you know?

CONCLUSION

When circumstances come our way that threaten to overwhelm or derail us, we can look to God's Word and the wise counsel of those who are faithful in their Christian walks. They will be able to point us in the right direction.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither.”
(2 Kings 4:10)

It always began with a phone call to my husband, Jerry. “Sam,” (short for Samson or “strong man,” and her way of saying she had a need for someone with strong arms), “Could you stop by after school?” Immediately my husband knew that Sister Miller would be having houseguests, and there was furniture to be moved. Her home was not large, but it was always open to visiting ministers, evangelists, friends, relatives, those recuperating from illness or accident, a college student on Christmas break, or a recently reformed and released prisoner.

My husband chuckles when he recalls one particular time. A family with several children came to sleep and eat there. At the same time, a youth group arrived from out of town for dinner on Sunday, and of course, the youths from our local church needed to eat with them. Twenty-two places were necessary at the table! That meant putting an extra dining table into one of the bedrooms. Dutifully, “Sam” moved the twin beds to the basement so all the guests could be seated.

One of my best friends from my early days as a Christian made her home with the Millers, so I, too, had been part of preparations at the “Miller Hotel & Dining” long before I became “Mrs. Samson.”

Recently as my husband and I reminisced about Sister Miller’s hospitality, neither of us could recall that she ever inferred in any way that having company was inconvenient, or that she was unhappy to serve any particular person. On a few occasions, she did say after the event that she was weary. However, we could tell it was a *satisfied* weary.

She put as much love into cooking for the ravenous students as she would have for a visiting pastor. She wanted her home to be very clean, the beds to be comfortable, and the food to be healthy and plentiful. And there was always a quiet place with a Bible, a reading lamp, and a desk or other writing surface available for her guests.

Sister Miller reminds me of the Shunammite woman in today’s text, who recognized Elisha as God’s prophet. This Shunammite was passing along a wonderful example, for the Bible encourages gracious

hospitality. She was not seeking a reward but was only concerned to help the prophet. And looking back I can see that Sister Miller had that attitude also.

Hospitality can be a contagious condition. My husband and I have discovered the blessing of sharing our home with others, especially those of the household of faith. Even though these guests may be recent acquaintances, they become part of our prayer network.

God blessed the Shunammite woman, and He will also bless us if we seek to have hospitable hearts.

BACKGROUND

The events of chapters 4-7 took place during the reign of Jehoram of the Northern Kingdom, but they are not necessarily recorded in chronological order.

In verses 1-7 of today’s text, one of the sons of the prophets had passed away and his wife and sons owed a debt they could not pay. According to the Law of Moses, debts could be paid by people selling themselves or their children to be servants until the year of jubilee. (See Leviticus 25:39-40). When this widow came to Elisha, the creditor was ready to force her sons to be slaves.

The pot of oil was the family’s only asset, and Elisha gave specific instructions. They were to borrow many containers. When they had collected the vessels, they were told to shut the door, and in the privacy of their home, God performed the miracle. The widow and her sons exemplified obedience and faith, and with the sale of the oil, they paid their debt and had money left for living expenses.

The second incident, recorded in verses 8-17, took place in Shunem, a village of the tribe of Issachar. It overlooked the Valley of Jezreel, with Mount Carmel approximately fifteen miles to the west. The village was nearly midway between the Prophet Elisha’s home in Abel-mehola and Mount Carmel, where he went to pray and meditate. Consequently, Elisha was frequently in this area.

The woman in this portion of text was prominent socially and enjoyed some wealth. She provided Elisha food when he passed through the town, and then perceived that a private room on the roof of her home would be helpful to him. Her generous hospitality was without selfish motivation, but she was rewarded in a way that was completely unexpected to her. She had a son even though her husband was aged.

This is the first mention of Gehazi, Elisha’s servant. It is possible that he filled the same role for Elisha as Elisha had for Elijah.

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- 3.** Why did the Shunammite woman suggest to her husband that they build a room for Elisha?

CONCLUSION

God will bless us if we look for opportunities to offer kindness and hospitality to others.

2. The widow's miracle was in proportion to her obedience in the number of vessels she collected. What are some steps that we might take that will result in abundant blessings from the Lord?

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“So she went and came unto the man of God to mount Carmel. And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, yonder is that Shunammite: Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well.” (2 Kings 4:25-26)

During the 1950s, Dr. Helen Roseveare was working as a missionary in the Belgian Congo (now named Democratic Republic of Congo). One night at their mission, a mother died leaving a premature baby and a two-year-old daughter. Without an incubator or electricity, keeping the baby alive looked nearly impossible. Then the last hot water bottle broke. During a prayer time with orphanage children, Dr. Roseveare asked them to pray for the baby and its sister. She explained the need to keep the baby warm and about the hot water bottle. As they prayed, a ten-year-old girl named Ruth said, “Please God, send us a water bottle. It’ll be no good tomorrow, God, the baby will be dead. So, please send it this afternoon. And while You are about it, would You please send a dolly for the little girl so she’ll know You really love her?”

The boldness of the prayer made Dr. Roseveare gasp inwardly. She knew that the answer would have to come from her homeland, and in the nearly four years she had been in Africa, she had never received a package from home. Furthermore, a hot water bottle would hardly seem a likely item to send to the equator. She did not believe it could happen.

During that afternoon, a car delivered a twenty-two pound parcel from England. Opening it with the orphanage children, Dr. Roseveare found clothes, bandages, and raisins. Then she put her hand in the box and pulled out a hot water bottle. Ruth ran up, sure that a doll would also be in the box, and indeed a small, beautifully dressed one was there. Ruth’s eyes shone, for she had never doubted.

Little Ruth’s confidence that God would answer prayer was similar to the faith demonstrated by the Shunammite woman in our focus verse. This woman had been unable to have children, and the Lord had honored the word of Elisha and performed a miracle, giving her a son. When the boy died, she believed that Elisha could again touch God for another miracle.

Today, God wants us to trust Him. In any situation we face, we can come to Him with boldness and

complete confidence, and we can do it without delay, just as Ruth and the Shunammite woman did. God answers prayer now just as He did in days gone by. While He may not always answer in exactly the way we desire, He will answer with what is best for us.

Do you have a need today? Why not bring it boldly to God? He will honor your confidence in Him.

BACKGROUND

Today’s text continues the record of the miracles performed by Elisha. God used him to raise a dead boy back to life, to make poisoned food safe, and to multiply a food donation.

The Shunammite woman had received a son as a blessing in return for her kindness to Elisha. When the boy was old enough to accompany his father in reaping the harvest, he was smitten in the field with a severe headache, perhaps caused by sunstroke. Once home, he died, and the woman placed his body in Elisha’s room.

When the woman told her husband, “It shall be well,” the word *well* meant “completeness, wholeness, or peace.”

The woman made no delay in going to Elisha. She went past Gehazi, Elisha’s servant, with a minimal greeting. When she reached Elisha, she “caught him by the feet.” Her prone position showed humility and desperation. Her question, “Did I desire a son . . .?” gave Elisha some indication of what troubled her. He sent Gehazi in haste with his staff—the symbol of his prophetic authority and God’s power—directing him not to greet anyone along the way because it might detain him. Yet the woman was not satisfied until Elisha began the journey toward her home.

In a manner similar to his predecessor, Elijah (see 1 Kings 17:20-21), Elisha stretched himself upon the child. This should not be interpreted as some type of artificial respiration. The child had been dead long enough for the woman to travel approximately fifteen miles from Shunem to Mount Carmel, and then come back again with Elisha and Gehazi. God performed a miracle in restoring the child, and the woman expressed her gratitude by falling at Elisha’s feet and bowing to the ground.

Verses 38-41 describe a miracle that God performed when Elisha was teaching his students at Gilgal. Because of a famine, it was necessary to cook whatever was available. Some Bible scholars believe the wild gourds that were collected were wild cucumbers that could be distinguished by their bitter taste after cooking. Eating large quantities of these could

be fatal. The meal which Elisha put into the pot was probably not curative; rather, it was a symbol that God had made the food edible.

Verses 42-44 tell of a man who brought his firstfruits to Elisha. The Law of Moses commanded that the firstfruits belonged to God, and originally these offerings were given to the priests. However, in Elisha's time, the priests were not godly, and many served Baal or the golden calves. Therefore, this righteous man brought his offering to the prophet. Elisha chose to share it, probably with his students. Though the offering was not large, God multiplied it to feed one hundred men.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah
 - B. Jehoram of Israel
 - 3. The ministry of Elisha
 - b. The resurrection of the Shunammite's son
 - (2) The death of the son (4:18-28)
 - (3) The resurrection of the son (4:29-37)
 - c. The purification of the stew (4:38-41)
 - d. The miracle of the loaves (4:42-44)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did the Shunammite woman do when her son died?

2. Why do you think the staff of Elisha that Gehazi used had no effect on the child?

3. What makes it possible for us to approach God with confidence?

CONCLUSION

Boldly coming to God when we have a need can demonstrate faith in Him. We should not hesitate in making our requests to Him.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.” (2 Kings 5:3)

Agnes Clasper was saved in 1911 when she was in her early teens and living in Scotland. Later she married, and she and her husband had a little girl who was diagnosed with tuberculosis. Agnes said, “We spent a fortune to try to get healing for our little one. Climates failed, medicine failed, nine physicians in Scotland had failed.” The child was given up to die by the doctors. Many times when Agnes was on the way to the doctor’s office, she would look up into the heavens and say, “Jesus, I know if You were on earth, You would heal my child.”

Agnes had a desire to come to America. Their family said they would bury their child at sea, but God brought them over seven thousand miles to Portland, Oregon. They contacted the best specialist in the city, and he treated the girl, but still she did not get well. Then one day Agnes met a godly woman and shared the story of her daughter. This woman said, “If you had only known to have brought her down to the Apostolic Faith Mission on Burnside Street, our people would have prayed, and God would have healed your child.”

When Agnes went to a service, God whispered to her soul, “These are the people you have prayed so long for.” She heard that there is power in the Blood of Jesus to heal all manner of diseases, and she promised to trust in that healing power. From that moment, the child began to improve, and God completely healed her body. The girl never had another trace of the disease and lived to marry and become a mother and later a grandmother.

“If only . . .” Another young lady centuries before had spoken those words to the wife of Naaman the Syrian, who was a leper. Both the maid captive in Naaman’s house and the woman whom Agnes Clasper met had confidence that God would heal. What marvelous faith and assurance! And both of these women used their confidence in God to reach out to others.

All around us are people who need the touch of God. Do we have that same confidence in our hearts so we can share the Good News of what God can do for them? God is the same today, and if we are serving Him, we can say with assurance that He can forgive sins, change hearts, and heal sick bodies.

BACKGROUND

Syria, the country northeast of Israel, commonly raided areas to the south and frequently took home captives. Ben-hadad was Syria’s king, and Naaman, the captain of the army. Naaman was a great warrior, and he was honored by his king and also the Syrian people.

Leprosy was a skin disease that took various forms. At its worst, it mutilated a person’s body and could be fatal. In Bible times no cure was known for leprosy. Some forms of the disease were contagious, and lepers in Israel were immediately removed from society. Syria’s laws did not quarantine victims, but the disease eventually would have rendered Naaman helpless and shortened his life.

Little is known about the maid who spoke the life-changing words recorded in today’s text. She was a captive from Israel; she served Naaman’s wife; she showed concern; and she had enough faith in God and Elisha to say confidently that healing was possible.

Jehoram, king of Israel, was astounded when Naaman arrived in Israel with a letter from Ben-hadad requesting healing for his warrior. The gift accompanying the request was large—the silver and gold were probably worth over two million dollars in today’s money, plus the ten sets of clothing.

Although healing was impossible by man’s ability, God used Elisha to perform a miracle that illustrated God’s power to both the Syrians and also the Israelites. Naaman nearly lost his opportunity to be healed because of his outrage over what he was told to do. The Abana river is called the Barada today, and it flows through Damascus. Bible scholars are unsure where the Pharpar was. It may have been the Nahr Taura (a tributary of the Barada) or a river about ten miles southwest of Damascus. In contrast to those, the Jordan was muddy and small.

Naaman was proud and expected to be treated in a way he thought was appropriate to his position. Following Elisha’s directions required humility and obedience. Yet, he was willing to listen to the entreaty and wisdom of his servants.

Not only Naaman’s skin was changed when he dipped in the Jordan; his heart was changed also. He recognized God as the only true God and wanted to take home some earth from the land of Israel to worship upon. Naaman knew that occasionally matters of state would necessitate that he assist his king in the temple of Rimmon, but he purposed to worship only God.

Elisha's refusal of Naaman's gifts indicated that miracles could not be acquired with money. Yet, Gehazi weakened that concept when he ran after Naaman, lied about a need, and took money. Consequently, Naaman's leprosy came upon Gehazi.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah
 - B. Jehoram of Israel
 3. The ministry of Elisha
 - e. The cleansing of Naaman (5:1-27)
 - (1) The leprosy of Naaman (5:1)
 - (2) The advice of the maid (5:2-4)
 - (3) The message to the king of Israel (5:5-7)
 - (4) The instructions of Elisha (5:8-14)
 - (5) The gratitude of Naaman (5:15-19)
 - (6) The sin of Gehazi (5:20-27)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why do you think Elisha sent Naaman a message telling him to dip in the Jordan River seven times, rather than delivering the message himself?

2. When Gehazi ran after Naaman, what did he take from him?

3. Why do you suppose Gehazi received the leprosy of Naaman?

4. What steps can we take to help us be more bold in witnessing to others of God's power?

CONCLUSION

Resolve today to have boldness and faith to declare to those in need the great power God has to make a difference in their lives.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?” (2 Kings 6:15)

A missionary in Mongolia named James Gilmour had first aid knowledge but was not a doctor. One day a wounded soldier with a thigh bone that was badly broken was brought to him for treatment. Mr. Gilmour did not know how to set the bone, and there were no doctors or books available. It might have been easy for him to cry, “Alas! How shall we do?” But instead, he prayed and asked God for help.

While Mr. Gilmour was dealing with this patient, a group of beggars arrived requesting money. He quickly gave them a little gift and some spiritual exhortation, and all but one of the group left. The man who stayed was so underfed that he was nearly a skeleton. Suddenly, Mr. Gilmore recognized him as the answer to his prayer, because he was a living illustration of anatomy. He asked the beggar for permission to examine him, traced the man’s femur bone with his fingers, and then set the soldier’s fracture. Miraculously, God had solved the dilemma.

In today’s text, when Elisha’s servant saw that they were surrounded by the enemy army, he thought they were in an impossible predicament. Yet, by faith, the prophet saw that God is greater than any situation, and that He was in control and would help them.

Today, while we may not face the need to set a fracture or be delivered from an army, we all experience circumstances that can cause us to think, Alas! What can we do? Perhaps we have a rebellious teenager, a terminal illness, a financial crisis, or a leaky roof. Whatever our situation, we can remember the point of this account—God is at work for His people in ways that we cannot always see. He knows where we are and what we are facing, and He has the power to bring us through and be glorified in our lives.

If you have an “Alas!” circumstance in your life, why not look to the Lord and see how He will undertake for you?

BACKGROUND

The first six verses of the text tell of the axe which floated. One of the communities of the sons of the prophets under Elisha’s leadership had outgrown their facilities. The place was “too strait” (too small)

for them, so they undertook a building project. This was probably the school at Jericho, because they went to the Jordan River for the wood. When God miraculously caused the borrowed axe to float, it illustrated that He and also Elisha cared about these students. Baal worship was prevalent, and this miracle would have helped reassure the young men that God was with them.

Verses 8-23 show God’s miraculous protection of Elisha and his servant. Syria, to Israel’s northeast, regularly made guerrilla-type raids into Israel. Yet, God repeatedly thwarted Syria by revealing their plans to Elisha, who told Israel’s king, Jehoram. Ben-hadad, Syria’s king, thought to capture Elisha, and sent a large contingency of horses and chariots to surround Dothan at night. The situation was quite alarming to Elisha’s servant, until God opened his eyes.

In the Hebrew language, the word translated *blindness* in verse 18 conveys the thought of “loss or distortion of vision resulting in mental confusion and bewilderment.” The same word was also used one other place in the Bible—Genesis 19:11—when the angels prevented the men of Sodom from assaulting them.

Elisha led the army from Dothan to Israel’s capital, Samaria, a distance of eleven or twelve miles to the south. Even though Israel’s king was ungodly, he respected Elisha, calling him “my father.” And he humbly followed Elisha’s instructions, giving the Syrians royal treatment and then sending them home.

God’s power was illustrated in various ways by this incident: Elisha’s foreknowledge of Syria’s plans, the host of Heaven that surrounded Elisha, the revelation to his servant of this fact, the blindness of the Syrian army, and then the recovery of their sight.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah
 - B. Jehoram of Israel
 3. The ministry of Elisha
 - f. The miracle of the floating axe (6:1-7)
 - g. The deliverance of Israel from Syria
 - (1) Syria’s disgust for Elisha (6:8-14)
 - (2) Syria’s blinded army (6:15-19)
 - (3) Syria’s army captured (6:20-23)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How many times did Elisha's disclosures to the king of Israel save Israel from Syria?

2. Why do you think Elisha's servant did not see the heavenly host at first?

[illegible]

3. How might God “open” our eyes to His power that is available to help us?

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

When you face desperate times, keep confidence that God will see you through.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.”
(2 Kings 7:2)

George Müller (1805-1898) was a man of faith and prayer. When God put it in his heart to build orphanages for the many ragged children running wild in the streets of London, he had only two shillings (fifty cents) in his pocket. Although he did not make his wants known to anyone but God, over seven million dollars was sent to him for building and maintaining these orphan homes. No matter how pressing the need, George simply renewed his prayers to God for a solution, and either money or food always came in time to save the situation.

A well-known story is an example of his simple faith that God would provide. One morning the plates, cups, and bowls on the table of the orphanage were empty. There was no food in the larder, and no money to buy provisions. The children were waiting for their morning meal, when Müller said, “Children, you know we must be in time for school.” Bowing his head, he said, “Dear Father, we thank Thee for what Thou art going to give us to eat.” As he spoke, there was a knock on the door. The baker stood there, and said, “Mr. Müller, I couldn’t sleep last night. Somehow I felt you didn’t have bread for breakfast and the Lord wanted me to send you some. So I got up at 2:00 a.m. and baked some fresh bread, and have brought it.” Müller thanked the man. No sooner had this transpired than there was a second knock at the door. It was the milkman. He announced that his milk cart had broken down right in front of the orphanage, and he would like to give the children his cans of fresh milk so he could empty his wagon and repair it. No wonder, years later, when Müller traveled the world as an evangelist, he was heralded as “the man who gets things from God!”

What a contrast between George Müller’s faith and the disbelief of the official in our focus verse! At the time of our text, the people of Samaria were in a desperate situation after a prolonged siege—famine had brought them to horrific straits. Then, under the direction of the Spirit of God, the Prophet Elisha prophesied that plenty of food would be available the next day, and at a low price. The official assisting the

king did not believe it was possible. He said, “Behold, if the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?” He showed his lack of faith when he doubted the Prophet Elisha’s word, and consequently, his fate was to witness the miracle but not to participate in it.

When we face “impossible” situations, it is easy to become preoccupied with the problems instead of approaching God with a spirit of expectancy for a solution. Are you facing a difficult situation today? Believe God, and see what miracles He will do on your behalf!

BACKGROUND

This passage details another attack by Syria on Israel, and God’s miraculous intervention.

There were three kings in Syria’s history who were named Ben-hadad. The Ben-hadad in today’s text is probably the one who warred against Samaria earlier and surrendered to Ahab. Later, he commanded the army that killed Ahab. It is thought that Ahab’s son, Jehoram, was probably king of Israel at this time.

The full host of Syria was involved in this attack. They cut off Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom, from any outside supplies or help, causing the people within the city to starve. A donkey was an unclean animal under the Law, and therefore would not ordinarily be used for food. Yet, the price of a donkey’s head was approximately fifty dollars. About a half-cup of dove excrement cost three dollars; this may have been used either as food or fuel. Mothers were desperate enough to eat their dead children.

The king of Israel, Jehoram, blamed Elisha for the situation and vowed to behead him. Some scholars believe his wrath may have been because Elisha encouraged the king not to surrender, but to repent and look to God for deliverance. Elisha’s reference to the king as “this son of a murderer” may have been based on Ahab’s killing of Naboth, or perhaps it referred to the king’s own intent to kill Elisha.

The elders of the city were with Elisha, so they must have supported him in whatever role he played during the siege. God let Elisha know the king’s plan, and Elisha had the door barred so the messenger could not enter. The king followed soon, and his comment, “What should I wait for the LORD any longer?” may have meant he intended to surrender to the Syrians.

Elisha predicted two specific happenings. First, he foretold imminent deliverance; grain would be sold in the city’s marketplace. The prophet also predicted the death of “a lord on whose hand the king leaned,”

a military captain or official, because this man did not believe Elisha's words. Both of Elisha's prophecies came to pass—food was sold inexpensively the next day, and the captain saw, but died without partaking.

The Law required lepers to live outside the city. The desperation of the four lepers mentioned in the text caused them to go to the Syrian camp, which they discovered was deserted. God had caused the Syrians to hear “the noise of a great host,” distinctly hearing horses, chariots, and hosts of foot soldiers. They assumed Israel had hired help from the Hittites, who were to the north, and the Egyptians, who were to the south. The Syrians fled, strewing their belongings for about twenty-five miles (the distance from Samaria to the Jordan).

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah
 - B. Jehoram of Israel
 - 3. The ministry of Elisha
 - g. The deliverance of Israel from Syria
 - (4) Syria's siege of Samaria (6:24-7:20)
 - (a) The siege of Samaria (6:24-30)
 - (b) The king's anger for Elisha (6:31-33)
 - (c) The predictions of Elisha (7:1-2)
 - (d) The discovery of the lepers (7:3-8)
 - (e) The search for the Syrians (7:9-15)
 - (f) The fulfillment of Elisha's predictions (7:16-20)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What prompted the lepers to go to the camp of the Syrians?

2. Why should the king's captain have believed the prophecy of Elisha?

3. When a situation looks impossible, how can we encourage ourselves to believe God's promises?

CONCLUSION

When you face a difficult situation in your life, pray, and trust the Lord to answer!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And it came to pass, as he was telling the king how he had restored a dead body to life, that, behold, the woman, whose son he had restored to life, cried to the king for her house and for her land. And Gehazi said, My lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life.” (2 Kings 8:5)

God is always ahead of us, and He can work behind the scenes to resolve difficult situations if we will ask Him. This was illustrated to me at a time when the environment at my job was very competitive. There was a “dog-eat-dog” mentality among some staff members, who would do whatever it took to get ahead of another person. I had been told to watch my back because nobody else could be counted on to look out for me.

A particular manager was doing everything he could to move up the ladder of success, and at one point he began to say negative things about me to my superiors behind my back. To my face he appeared to be a support and friend, but other managers warned me of what was happening. My first tendency was to go straight to my area manager and clear up the false stories. However, my wife encouraged me to pray about it and to not get involved in my own defense, and I decided that was good advice. We both went to prayer on the issue. For a while it looked as if I might lose my job, yet I continued to do the best work I could, praying for God’s wisdom and guidance, and not getting involved in the politics of my workplace. Just when the situation looked hopeless to me, in an amazing way the truth was revealed to the district management, and I was told my job was safe. God had heard our prayers and worked on my behalf.

God was also working in the life of the Shunammite woman in today’s text. It appears that before the impending famine, she’d had considerable wealth that could have been lost if she had not made correct business decisions. Instead of using her own thinking, she had obeyed Elisha’s advice and left her house and property to move to another land for the duration of the famine. Seven years later, when she returned, her property was inhabited by strangers, and it seemed all was lost.

However, instead of defeat, the result of years of obedience and faith in God paid off. As she went before King Joram to attempt to reclaim her land, God was already working in her behalf. Imagine coming

into a court to defend your cause, and hearing your name and family being talked about! That is what happened. Providentially, Elisha’s servant was telling the king at that precise moment about this woman’s son being raised from the dead and how God had cared for her and her family. The Shunammite woman was able to tell the king of the loss of all her property. The resulting miracle was more than the woman could have imagined. The king appointed people to make sure she not only got her home and land back, but also the profit that had been gained while she was gone!

God cares about His people and often intervenes in ways unknown to us. He has a perfect plan for us. If we are quick to obey, and truly trust that He is in charge of what happens to us, it may surprise us what the Lord can do because He goes before us.

BACKGROUND

Chapter 8 begins with more accounts of Elisha’s ministry, some of which are not recorded in chronological order. The events regarding the Shunammite woman must have taken place before Gehazi became a leper (2 Kings 5:27), so they would have transpired between 848 and 841 B.C., when the reign of King Joram and the ministry of Elisha overlapped.

The Shunammite woman, of the tribe of Issachar, lived in Shunem. This was a small village to the southeast of Mount Carmel, where the modern city of Solem is located. Elisha stopped often at Shunem while passing through the area. The Shunammite couple was wealthy and built a room for Elisha to stay in whenever he came through.

One day Elisha warned the Shunammite woman to flee with her household to a neighboring land, because the Lord had shown him that there was to be a seven year famine. He told her she could suffer great loss and perhaps even her life if she stayed in Shunem. It appears that her husband had died because he is not mentioned at this time.

The Shunammite woman obeyed the warning of Elisha and fled to the land of the Philistines. After the famine was over, she and her family moved back to Shunem, where she found that her property and home had been confiscated either by a stranger or the king. She had lost everything. She went before King Joram to plead her cause, just as Gehazi, Elisha’s servant, was telling the king about this woman’s son being restored to life. The woman quickly verified Gehazi’s story, causing the king to be moved to give her all her land, her home, and even the income that had been earned off the land during her seven year absence.

In verse 7, the text moves ahead without reflecting the time lapse that included the healing of Naaman, the Syrian commander. This portion of Scripture gives another example of the political influence that Elisha had because of the power of God that was working through him. Elisha traveled to Syria, where King Ben-hadad was deathly sick. Knowing of the healing of Naaman and some of the miracles done by Elisha, he requested help.

Ben-hadad was a common name given to the Syrian kings who reigned at that time. There were at least two, and possibly three, kings with the same name. Most historians identify the king in today's text as King Ben-hadad II, who ruled in Damascus.

Historians state that King Ben-hadad II was a weak ruler who failed to protect the far-reaching conquests of his father, and Israel began to regain her land and fortunes during his reign. It was with this background that King Ben-hadad, when he was sick and appeared to be dying, sent for the Prophet Elisha. He sent the man he thought was his most trusted official, Hazael, to Elisha to seek for the help of God.

Elisha told Hazael that the king would recover from his illness, but then added that he would die. Elisha stunned Hazael by just staring at him. Then Elisha began to weep, and told Hazael that he would kill the king, take his throne, and would murder many of God's people. Hazael pretended to be shocked at this pronouncement.

Yet, when Hazael returned to King Ben-hadad, he only recounted part of the prophecy—that the king would recover. The king must have been healed that very day, for the next day Hazael killed him and became king in his stead. The prophecy of Elisha was fulfilled as Hazael turned against the Israelites and ravaged much of their land (2 Kings 10:33).

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah
 - B. Jehoram of Israel
 3. The ministry of Elisha
 - h. The care for the Shunammite woman (8:1-6)
 - i. The predictions of Elisha in Damascus (8:7-15)
 - (1) Ben-hadad's recovery, but murder (8:7-10)
 - (2) Hazael's usurpation (8:11-13)
 - (3) Elisha's words fulfilled (8:14-15)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why did the Prophet Elisha weep when he confronted Hazael?

2. How do you think the Shunammite woman expected to be received by the king?

3. What should be our attitude when we present the hard situations of our lives to the Lord?

CONCLUSION

We serve a God who is way ahead of us. Having faith and complete trust in Him will bring us peace and blessings.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And he walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did evil in the sight of the LORD, as did the house of Ahab: for he was the son in law of the house of Ahab.” (2 Kings 8:27)

Have you noticed that small children are great imitators? Their first words are echoes of what they hear. If we say “bye-bye,” they repeat it. Even that oft-spoken “no” comes from them hearing an adult say it first.

Older children also imitate adults. Due to some British roots in my family, I tend to say words containing “wh” using more air than most Americans. When I was teaching sixth grade, my students loved my pronunciation and started changing the way they spoke to sound like me.

Imitation goes much deeper than sounds and words, though. Children imitate behavior, manners, and even attitudes. Twice a year, I met with the parents of my sixth graders for a conference. I heard the same excuses from a parent as the child when I commented upon the student’s failure to turn in work. Correspondingly, I often saw self-discipline in the parent of a responsible child.

What influence do we have over our children when it comes to spiritual matters? We cannot make them become Christians by teaching them to live good lives or taking them to church, but the examples we set before them could make the difference in whether or not they see the Gospel as truth and choose to embrace it themselves.

Certainly many children raised in ungodly homes later learned the truth and chose it. I am the first generation in my family to be raised in a Christian home, as a cycle of sin was broken by my parents when they came to faith in Christ. Nevertheless, many children follow the steps of their parents. Daily habits learned in childhood form attitudes and behaviors that are kept for the rest of their lives. Based on our examples, will our children think it is important to attend church? Will they see the value of self-sacrifice for others? Will they consider prayer vital?

In today’s text, Ahaziah was an evil king largely because of his mother’s influence. He still had a choice, of course, but he was undoubtedly influenced to do evil by exposure to her sinful behavior. How would things have been different if Ahaziah’s father had not married into the wicked house of Ahab?

Whatever might have happened, there are lessons to learn from this account. The person we marry will have a significant impact on our spiritual future, and the way we raise our children will influence their futures, for good or evil.

Let us pray for wisdom and guidance to walk carefully and conduct ourselves in a way that leads those we influence to live godly lives. Our examples will make a difference to those who watch!

BACKGROUND

The reigns of Jehoram and Ahaziah, kings of Judah, demonstrate the far-reaching adverse results of a marriage arranged by Jehoshaphat, a good king of Judah, and Ahab, a wicked king of Israel. For political advantage between Israel and Judah, Jehoshaphat had his son Jehoram marry Ahab and Jezebel’s daughter Athaliah.

Athaliah brought Baal worship to Judah and helped influence Jehoram in his choice to follow the evil ways of Ahab rather than his father Jehoshaphat’s godly ways. Jehoram killed his brothers and encouraged the people of Judah in idolatry.

The Edomites were the descendants of Esau and their land was to Judah’s southeast. Judah had controlled Edom, but in today’s text the people of Edom revolted, and Jehoram was unsuccessful in regaining dominion over them. Libnah, to Judah’s west, was a fortress on the border between Judah and Philistia, and it revolted at the same time. Losing control of these areas weakened Judah.

In time, the Philistines and Arabians invaded Judah, taking Jehoram’s possessions, his sons, and his wives, so that only his youngest son, Ahaziah, was left. The nation of Judah was spared only because God was faithful to His covenant with David, promising to “give him alway a light, and to his children,” thus preserving the Messianic line.

Athaliah influenced her son Ahaziah toward wickedness, just as she had her husband. She was referenced as the “daughter of Omri” (in this case meaning granddaughter) to show that she was a member of Omri’s evil dynasty.

Ramoth-Gilead was on the northeast border of Israel (the Northern Kingdom) and was controlled by Syria. Ahaziah joined with Joram (king of Israel) to regain this territory, and Joram was wounded in the battle. The wicked reign of Ahaziah lasted only one year before he died violently at the hand of Jehu’s army (2 Kings 9:27).

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah
 - C. Jehoram of Judah (8:16-24)
 - 1. The character of Jehoram's reign (8:16-19)
 - 2. The revolt of Edom and Libnah (8:20-22)
 - 3. The death of Jehoram (8:23-24)
 - D. Ahaziah of Judah (8:25-29)
 - 1. The character of Ahaziah's reign (8:25-27)
 - 2. The alliance against Syria (8:28-29)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why wouldn't God destroy Judah during the wicked reign of Jehoram?

2. Why do you think Jehoram and Ahaziah were such evil kings?

3. What can you do to influence others to do good, not evil?

CONCLUSION

As we make God the head of our lives, our children and the people around us will see the truth of the Gospel in action. Let's provide them a good pattern to imitate.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Elisha the prophet called one of the children of the prophets, and said unto him, Gird up thy loins, and take this box of oil in thine hand, and go to Ramoth-gilead: And when thou comest thither, look out there Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi, and go in, and make him arise up from among his brethren, and carry him to an inner chamber; Then take the box of oil, and pour it on his head, and say, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel. Then open the door, and flee, and tarry not.” (2 Kings 9:1-3)

In his work for the Lord, David Livingstone faced a difficult task. The missionary’s intense desire for the people of Africa to hear the Gospel had led him into the interior of that continent. Upon arriving in the area selected for a home base, a large hut was erected as the mission station. Unfortunately, the area was overrun by lions. The villagers were terrified because, as they said, “The lion, the lord of the night, kills our cattle and sheep even in the daytime.” Livingstone recognized that this threatening situation had to be dealt with. He knew that if he could kill one of the lions, the others would flee. So, taking his gun and telling the people to bring their spears, he led the villagers on a lion hunt.

Deep in the jungle, Livingstone spotted an enormous lion behind a bush. Taking careful aim, he fired both barrels. The lion was wounded, but while the missionary was reloading, it sprang toward him. Livingstone described what happened next, saying, “The lion caught me by the shoulder and we both came to the ground together. Growling horribly, he shook me as a terrier dog does a rat.”

Some of the villagers with Livingstone rushed to his aid, and the lion turned upon two of them. But at that moment the bullets Livingstone had fired took effect, and the lion fell dead. Livingstone had eleven tooth marks on his body and the bone of his left arm was splintered, but he succeeded in his purpose. The area was rid of the menace.

In our text today, we read of another man who faced a challenging task. Elisha the prophet commissioned a younger prophet to go to Jehu, son of Jehoshaphat. His instructions were to take Jehu away to a secluded place and anoint him king over Israel. Many years before, Elijah had prophesied that numerous people would be killed when Jehu became king (see 1 Kings 19:16-17), so Elisha urged the young

man to flee the area as soon as his task was accomplished. What thoughts must have gone through that young prophet’s mind as he faced this dangerous assignment?

While we likely never will need to face wild lions or anoint a king, there may be times in our Christian walk when the task appointed to us appears daunting. Perhaps we need to take a stand against something our boss requested, or stick up for our beliefs in a classroom. We must not fear, but remember that God is with us! One of our veteran ministers, George Hughes, used to say, “Where God’s finger points, His hand will make a way.” That was true in the time of Elisha; David Livingstone proved it true in Africa; and it will be true in our lives also. We can rest on the assurance that God will give us strength and courage to obey Him when we look His way for what we need. He will never fail!

BACKGROUND

The account given in this chapter illustrates two important Biblical truths: eventually sin is judged, and God’s Word will be fulfilled.

Verses 1-13 record how Jehu, son of Jehoshaphat, was anointed king of Israel. (This Jehoshaphat was not, however, the one who was king of Judah.) The prophet Elisha instructed one of the children of the prophets to go to Jehu, who apparently was chief of the captains, take him into a private place, and anoint him as king. The young prophet’s words to Jehu in verses 7 through 10 may have been a declaration of what would happen rather than a command. God ordered the anointing, knowing that Jehu would kill and may have used that foreknowledge to accomplish His justice.

Verses 14 through 37 record the slaying of Joram, Ahaziah, and Jezebel. During this time, the Israelites were at war, attempting to regain the city of Ramoth-Gilead. Jehoram, the current king and son of Ahab and Jezebel, had been wounded in battle. He left Jehu, the captain of his army, in charge while he recovered in Jezreel. When the newly anointed Jehu came upon the city, Jehoram wrongly assumed that he came with a message that could only be delivered to Jehoram himself, as the two messengers that were sent out did not return. It is worth noting that Jehoram met Jehu on the very property that had belonged to Naboth the Jezreelite. When Jehoram realized that this was a revolt, he turned to flee but was promptly killed by Jehu. Jehu then ordered his body to be thrown onto the land of Naboth.

Verses 30 through 37 record the fulfillment of a prophecy that was given to Elijah twenty years earlier (1 Kings 21:17-24) when Jezebel had Naboth the Jezreelite murdered so that Ahab could acquire his vineyard for a garden. Jezebel's death occurred exactly as had been prophesied, ending with the bloody account of her being eaten by dogs. Though it took many years for justice to be completed, it did occur, just as it had been foretold.

In verse 31, Jezebel made a reference to Zimri. This alludes to an incident recorded in 1 Kings 16:8-12, forty years prior, when Zimri, a general, had King Elah killed and then declared himself king. Zimri's reign was only seven days long and Jezebel seemed to be indicating that Jehu would find no peace after he took the crown by force. Though her reference was probably well understood, Zimri, like Jehu, was used as a tool of God's judgment on Elah for his wickedness (1 Kings 16:12).

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah
 - E. Jehu of Israel
 - 1. The anointing of Jehu to be king (9:1-10)
 - 2. The proclamation of Jehu as king (9:11-13)
 - 3. The bloodshed by Jehu
 - a. The murder of Jehoram (9:14-26)
 - (1) Jehu's trek to Jezreel (9:14-16)
 - (2) Jehoram alerted (9:17-20)
 - (3) Jehoram murdered (9:21-26)
 - b. The murder of Ahaziah (9:27-29)
 - c. The murder of Jezebel (9:30-37)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What action did Jehu take after being anointed by the prophet of God?

2. Jezebel was defiant even when judgment was upon her. Why do you think she hardened her heart even when death was imminent?

3. What steps should we take when faced with a challenging task in the work of the Lord?

CONCLUSION

As Christians, at some point we may be faced with a challenging assignment from God. When that happens, we must not hesitate to follow through with faith and obedience. God will be with us!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin.” (2 Kings 10:31)

One of my favorite stories about my grandfather, Alba Green, is how he came into the Apostolic Faith Church. Grandpa had been involved in a religious community in the State of Washington, and when that group disbanded, he began searching for a people who believed the whole Bible—a place where he could raise his family and be assured that they were being taught sound doctrine.

He heard about the Apostolic Faith work, and in 1921, he came to Portland to investigate. He sat in one meeting in the church at Front and Burnside, and afterward asked to speak to our founder, Florence Crawford. He told her, “There is enough power in this place to change the world!” He had found what he was looking for.

The next day, he contacted my grandmother and told her that the family would be moving to Portland. And that very day, he joined the laborers who were building the tabernacle on the church campground.

From then on, Grandpa was a wholehearted participant in the work of the Lord. For some years, he was employed by Southern Pacific Railway, but he devoted his after-hours time and Saturdays to whatever task was going on around the church, and made many out-of-town trips to assist in branch church projects. After his retirement, he went to work full-time for the church, and even lived on the church campground for the last years of his life so that he could be close by to take care of whatever needed to be done there. He raised his children to love and appreciate the Gospel, and four of them went into full-time Gospel work. The influence of his dedication impacted succeeding generations also. Today, many of his grandchildren and great-grandchildren have active roles in the Apostolic Faith organization. And *their* children are being brought up to love church and Sunday school as well!

Grandpa’s wholehearted commitment to the work of the Lord is a contrast to that of Jehu, the central figure of today’s text. Jehu knew of the true God; in fact, he was quite zealous in his destruction of Baalism. He burned the images of Baal throughout Israel, and destroyed the house of Baal. Sadly, however, Jehu was more of an instrument of the Lord than a servant. He was half-hearted in his commitment. In spite of his

destruction of the evidences of Baal, he remained an idolater himself. While he gave lip service to God, he continued to permit the worship of golden calves.

Just as my grandfather’s wholehearted commitment to God influenced those who followed him, Jehu’s half-hearted response to God influenced those under his rule and the generations who followed him. We read that during his reign “the LORD began to cut Israel short” (verse 32) and his children in successive generations continued in his idolatrous practices.

Today, check your commitment to God. Are you serving Him wholeheartedly, and being fully obedient to His Word? Going halfway is not enough! Remember, the choices you make today could very well have an impact on those around you, and even on those who come after you, if the Lord tarries. Let’s purpose in our hearts to be completely dedicated to God.

BACKGROUND

Under the direction of Elisha, a young prophet had anointed Jehu to be the next king of Israel (2 Kings 9:1-10). Jehu took advantage of his new position to smite the house of Ahab, and systematically destroyed anyone who might be a political threat. This action had been predicted by the young prophet who anointed him (2 Kings 9:7-10). God knew that Jehu would kill and may have used that foreknowledge to accomplish His justice against the evil house of Ahab.

The tenth chapter of 2 Kings records three violent acts that were committed by Jehu. First, he slew the seventy sons of Ahab. These men were a significant political threat to Jehu for, as descendants of Ahab, they had a great interest in battling to keep the throne of Israel in the dynasty of Omri. Jehu piled the seventy chopped-off heads at the city gate, possibly in order to strike terror in the heart of anyone who might oppose his rise to power.

Second, while visiting Samaria, he ordered the deaths of forty-two innocent people who had not yet heard about the massacre of Ahab’s sons. (The prophet Hosea later foretold that Jehu’s dynasty would be punished for this senseless slaughter. See Hosea 1:4-5.)

Third, he engineered the destruction of all the priests of Baal using deception and the threat of death to anyone who did not carry out his execution orders (verses 20-28).

Although Jehu was a violent, ruthless man who was likely motivated primarily by his desire for political power, he tried to justify his actions by claiming that he was merely carrying out the work and words of the Lord (verses 10 and 16). However, Jehu’s

hypocrisy is revealed in verses 29 and 31, for in spite of his apparent zeal to wipe out the worship of Baal, he allowed the Israelites to continue the worship of the golden calves in the cities of Bethel and Dan.

Some commentators view Jehu as a great patriot of Israel. He protested against Joram and the house of Ahab for the harm they did to Israel. He knew that to be strong, Israel must be cleansed of Baal worship. He likely recognized that Israel had to come back to the true God, but was unconcerned about how they did it. For Jehu, it seemingly was sufficient to worship God at the temple of the golden calves in Dan or Bethel. In addition, there may have been an element of political expediency involved. If Jehu had destroyed the golden calves, the people would have had to travel to the Southern Kingdom to worship God in Jerusalem.

The chapter closes with a summary of Jehu's twenty-eight-year reign. While Jehu had the influence and the energy to truly turn the nation back to God, his half-commitment left that potential unfulfilled and pointed to a lack of any real relationship with God.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah
 - E. Jehu of Israel
 3. The bloodshed by Jehu
 - d. The destruction of Ahab's lineage (10:1-11)
 - e. The destruction of Ahaziah's relatives (10:12-14)
 - f. The sparing of Jehonadab (10:15-17)
 - g. The eradication of Baal worship (10:18-28)
 - (1) The worshippers gathered (10:18-24)
 - (2) The worshippers annihilated (10:25-28)
 4. The reign of Jehu summarized (10:29-36)
 - a. His success and failure (10:29-31)
 - b. The rise of Hazael of Syria (10:32-33)
 - c. The death of Jehu (10:34-36)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What was Jehu's reward for destroying the house of Ahab?

2. Do you think God was pleased with Jehu's actions described in 2 Kings 10? Why or why not?

3. What evidence might we expect to see in the lives of those who are wholeheartedly dedicated to God and His service?

CONCLUSION

Because Jehu's heart was not perfect toward the Lord, much of the land of Israel was lost during his reign, and his dynasty only lasted for four generations. The spiritual choices we make today could have a lasting impact on future generations!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“But Jehosheba, the daughter of king Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king’s sons which were slain; and they hid him, even him and his nurse, in the bedchamber from Athaliah, so that he was not slain.” (2 Kings 11:2)

Ray was an adventuresome boy, and several times that spirit of adventure put his life in serious danger. On one occasion, he and several other young boys took a small rental boat out into the ocean to go fishing without telling their parents. When they were some distance from land, a strong wind came up, and they found themselves being blown out to sea. Their little boat rolled with the force of the waves, and water poured over its side, threatening to swamp them. The situation was dire! Then, remembering that their mothers had told them to call on the Lord if they were ever in need, the boys knelt and began to pray. As soon as they finished praying, they spotted a large boat coming their way! The boys were rescued and soon were safe on dry land.

A few years later, Ray was hauling clay out from under a bluff for a brick-making company. Ray’s horses had just pulled his cart out of the way when the whole mountainside caved in. If he had hesitated a moment longer, he would have been buried under tons of dirt. Again, the Lord preserved him from certain death.

Even after he became a Christian, Ray’s life was spared more than once. As a young man, he was flying a small plane near Tulsa, Oklahoma, when it went into a tailspin and fell four hundred feet to the ground. When his broken body was taken from the wreckage, he was not expected to live, but he prayed that God would heal him. The Lord touched him in an amazing way, repairing bones, ligaments, and internal injuries, and he was released from the hospital after only ten days.

A few years later, while piloting the missionary vessel the *Lower Light* at the north end of the Georgia Straits, Ray and his crew were in a storm. God preserved the life of Ray Crawford—and thus, His purpose for the man who served as the General Overseer of the Apostolic Faith organization for twenty-nine years was fulfilled.

Several thousand years earlier, as recorded in our focus verse, God had providentially intervened to preserve a little boy: young Prince Joash was saved from

death at the hands of wicked Queen Athaliah, who had plotted to kill all the king’s sons. God had promised that the Messiah would be born through David’s descendants, and God’s purpose was fulfilled through Joash’s survival.

Your life story probably does not include the dramatic events that occurred in the lives of Ray Crawford and young Joash, but perhaps you can look back at times when God spared your life. Even if you are not aware of specific occasions when His protecting hand has been over you, be assured, it has been there! Perhaps in eternity you will learn of the times when you were unknowingly delivered from danger or death.

God has a purpose for your life too, just as he did for Ray Crawford and Joash. Take time today to thank God for His divine protection. And then make a commitment in your heart to fulfill the purpose and plan God has for you!

BACKGROUND

In this chapter, the focus is upon two rulers of Judah: Athaliah and Joash. Athaliah was the daughter of King Ahab, of Israel, and Jezebel, his wife. Athaliah married Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and their son, Ahaziah, became the king of Judah. He was the father of Joash (which is also spelled Jehoash). Therefore, Joash was the great-grandson of Jehoshaphat, one of the better kings of Judah, as well as great-grandson of Ahab, one of the most wicked kings of Israel.

Jehu, who recently had been anointed king of Israel, killed Athaliah’s son, King Ahaziah of Judah, while he was visiting his uncle Jehoram, son of Ahab. Athaliah became wild with grief after Jehu killed Ahaziah, and went on a rampage to eliminate all of the royal seed and make herself queen. Jehosheba rescued Joash, who was of the lineage of David, from the threat of death by his own grandmother’s hand. Athaliah ruled Judah for six years while Joash was growing up in hiding.

Jehosheba was the aunt of the one-year-old Joash, and wife of Jehoiada the priest. She was a sister to Ahaziah, but probably was not the daughter of Athaliah. After rescuing the child Joash along with his nurse, she hid him in her bedchamber for six years. Because she was the wife of the priest and they lived in the Temple, this was an excellent place to hide the child from an idol-worshiper with no interest in God.

In the seventh year, her husband, Jehoiada the priest, formulated a plan for the coronation of Joash.

He assembled the rulers and the captains of the guard in the House of the Lord, and divided them into groups. A third of the guards were around the king's house, the gate of Sur, and the gate behind the guard. Two-thirds guarded the House of the Lord, with part of that group surrounding the boy. The priests, officers of the host, and guards who went off duty on the Sabbath remained in service until the evening, while those just coming on duty arrived in the morning of the Sabbath. Therefore, Jehoiada chose the Sabbath because the largest possible security was on hand to protect the new king. "Within the ranges" (verse 8) refers to inside the ranks of the guards.

Jehoiada the priest brought Joash in, heavily guarded, and gave him the "testimony" (another name for the Law of Moses), probably in the form of multiple scrolls. Jehoiada was on the side of the Lord God of Israel, and he became the spiritual force and counselor for the young king.

Athaliah heard the sound of the coronation of Joash, and was not pleased. The priest commanded that she be slain "without the ranges," or outside of the guarded area. Anyone who followed her was to be killed, as well as Mattan, the priest of Baal. Jehoiada was the catalyst for spiritual reform among the people as he set about destroying the houses of Baal and slaying the priests of Baal.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah
 - F. Athaliah of Judah (11:1-21)
 - 1. The purge by Athaliah (11:1)
 - 2. The preservation of Jehoash (11:2-3)
 - 3. The anointing of Jehoash (11:4-12)
 - a. The plot by Jehoiada (11:4-8)
 - b. The anointing (11:9-12)
 - 4. The demise of Athaliah (11:13-16)
 - 5. The revival under Jehoiada (11:17-21)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did the people say upon crowning seven-year-old Joash as king?

2. Why do you think the guards chose to obey Jehoiada rather than Athaliah?

3. What lessons can we learn from the priest Jehoiada that would apply to our day?

CONCLUSION

Just as God preserved Joash for a purpose, God has brought you to this point of life for a reason. As you allow God's plan to be worked out in your life, it will bring glory to Him and fulfillment to you.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“But Jehoiada the priest took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one cometh into the house of the LORD: and the priests that kept the door put therein all the money that was brought into the house of the LORD.” (2 Kings 12:9)

Not long ago, a young university student who had recently come to the United States from Nigeria visited an Apostolic Faith branch church near where she would be attending school. She was happy to meet other Nigerians among the congregation members, and mentioned to one of them that she had previously attended one of the five Apostolic Faith branches in Ondo State, Nigeria. The man she was speaking to was thrilled to hear that there are now *five* churches in that area. He said that when he left Ondo State eleven years ago, there was only one branch church! The work of the Lord is progressing in that region, and the expansion there—and in every part of the world where an Apostolic Faith work exists—is funded by the tithes and unsolicited offerings of the people of God.

Visitors attending our church services will notice that no collection plate is passed around the congregation for donations. Rather, small boxes have been mounted on the wall of the church sanctuary where people can unobtrusively place their tithes and free-will offerings. The money deposited there is used for the administration of the church organization, including the building of new churches as God leads.

A precedent for this type of financing for God’s work is given in today’s focus verse. King Jehoash handled the need for repairs on the Temple by instructing the priest Jehoiada to place offering boxes “beside the altar.” Periodically, the scribe and the high priest removed the money from the boxes, gave an accounting of what had been given, and distributed the funds to the workmen. Later, when the Temple work was completed, the money was applied to obtaining vessels for use in the Temple (see 2 Chronicles 24:14).

King Jehoash’s method demonstrated that we can all have an important part in the maintenance and expansion of the Lord’s work. We have a privilege and a responsibility to use the resources God has given us to promote the Gospel, and when we do so, we will find that God blesses us in return!

BACKGROUND

This chapter gives a brief summary of the forty-year reign of King Joash (or Jehoash) of Judah. After God miraculously spared his life by protecting him from the murderous designs of his grandmother, Athaliah, Joash assumed the throne at the age of seven. He was guided by the instruction and spiritual counsel of his high priest, Jehoiada, husband of the woman who had saved his life.

The most notable event of King Joash’s reign was the repair of the Temple (verses 4 through 16). An idol-worshipping nation had allowed the House of God to deteriorate, so at the beginning of his reign, Joash set out to repair it.

The year this task was undertaken is not given, but by the twenty-third year of Joash’s reign, the work had not been accomplished. Though there was no intimation of improper handling of funds, Joash relieved the priests of their collection responsibilities, and instructed the priest Jehoiada to place an offering box beside the altar. When funds were deposited in the box, they were gathered and distributed to the workmen repairing the Temple.

Verses 17 and 18 describe how Joash began paying tribute to Hazael, the king of Syria, who had invaded Philistia and was a growing threat to the people of Judah.

The chapter closes on a sad note. The king who had initially followed the counsel of his godly priest and mentor had begun to worship idols (see 2 Chronicles 24:17-26), had killed the Prophet Zechariah, and had been conquered by the Syrians. His kingdom spiraled out of control, and in the end, he was killed by his own officers. His son, Amaziah, assumed rulership of the kingdom.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah
 - G. Jehoash of Judah (12:1-21)
 - 1. The character of Jehoash’s reign (12:1-3)
 - 2. The repair of the Temple (12:4-16)
 - a. The proclamation of Jehoiada (12:4-5)
 - b. The failure of the priests (12:6-8)
 - c. The Temple repaired (12:9-16)
 - 3. The ransom to Hazael by Jehoash (12:17-18)
 - 4. The death of Jehoash (12:19-21)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How did Jehoash obtain the money he needed to carry out the repairs of the Temple?

2. Why do you think the workmen “dealt faithfully” (verse 15) with the tasks and the funds entrusted to them?

3. What can we learn from Jehoshaphat's great start and poor finish?

CONCLUSION

When we participate obediently and willingly in God's plan for financing His work, we will be blessed and the work of God will progress.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And he [Elisha] said, Take the arrows. And he [the king of Israel] took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed.” (2 Kings 13:18)

When I was in my mid-teens, I played on an organized baseball team. Generally I played first base, but occasionally I was directed to a position in the outfield. Although I was far from being a superstar, I had a lot of fun, and I always gave the game my very best effort.

After all these years, one particular game is still vivid in my mind. I was in the unfamiliar position of centerfielder when a long fly ball was hit over my head. I turned backward and ran as fast as I could, pushing with every muscle in my body to position myself so I could snag that ball. At the last moment I reached out as far as I could, and—wonder of wonders—I caught it! Of all the surprised people on the field that day, I undoubtedly was the most surprised of all!

Amazing things can happen when we give our best. In our text today, however, King Joash did not give that kind of effort. Joash was visiting the Prophet Elisha, who was on his death bed, and Elisha instructed the king to do a couple of unusual things. First, they together shot an arrow out of the open window. Elisha explained that this was prophetic of how God would deliver the Israelites from their oppressor, the Syrians. Next, Joash was instructed to take a handful of arrows and hit them against the ground, symbolic of Israel thrusting down Syria. Instead of following through vigorously, however, Joash responded in a half-hearted manner. By responding in this way, he forfeited the opportunity to win lasting victory over Syria. Israel would win some individual victories, but long-term peace would be denied them.

Today, we can learn a lesson from Joash’s half-heartedness. Whatever God asks us to do, let us be sure to do it with all of our might. Let’s not stop with a cursory effort, but invest ourselves wholeheartedly! We will receive the blessing for seizing that golden opportunity and speaking up at the right time, or for remaining on our knees in prayer a little longer—until the answer comes!

Our best may not seem like much, but it is of great value in God’s eyes! Let’s determine today to give it to God—in whatever we do. In the long run, we will be glad that we did.

BACKGROUND

In this chapter, the focus again is on the Northern Kingdom of Israel. It gives the record of the reigns of Jehoahaz (814-798 B.C.) and Jehoash (798-782 B.C.), who was also known as Joash. Little is said of King Jehoahaz, other than the indictment, “he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD.” Because the ruler led the way, the vast majority of the people followed him in doing evil. Yet there was a remnant that truly followed the Lord.

A weak ruler, Jehoahaz was unable to stand against the encroachment of Syria. Verse 3 tells us that because of the wickedness of Jehoahaz, God allowed the Syrians under King Hazael and later under his son, Ben-hadad, to torment Israel. Under the domination of Syria, the military strength of Israel was reduced to a mere fragment of what it had been. When Jehoahaz sought the Lord for help, God gave him a measure of deliverance, delaying His judgment. However, Jehoahaz’s seeking for the Lord did not involve repentance; he and the Israelites continued in their sin.

Jehoahaz’s son, Joash (also called Jehoash, and not to be confused with Judah’s King Joash, who reigned at the same time) followed in the ways of his father, though he had seen the Lord deliver the land when his father had cried out to God, and he was aware of the godly witness of Elisha. Since the prophet was near death, Joash paid him a final visit. Though Joash had not followed Elijah’s counsel, perhaps he regretted losing the man of God, his only connection with God in time of crisis.

Elisha instructed the king to “open the window eastward.” This would have been toward the area where Syria occupied land belonging to Israel (see 2 Kings 10:32-33). Striking the ground with the arrows represented smiting Syria. Elisha’s anger over Joash’s half-hearted response seems to indicate that Joash understood the symbolic action, but still failed to show a determined endorsement of God’s plans.

Verses 20 and 21 once again demonstrate the power of God which had rested upon Elisha. After Elisha died and had been buried in a sepulcher, a band of marauders had to bury one of their own in a hurry, and threw him into Elisha’s sepulcher. Immediately the dead man “revived, and stood up on his feet.”

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah
 - H. Jehoahaz of Israel (13:1-9)

1. The character of Jehoahaz's reign (13:1-3)
2. The Syrian oppression (13:4-7)
3. The death of Jehoahaz (13:8-9)
- I. Jehoash of Israel (13:10-25)
 1. Jehoash's reign and death (13:10-13)
 2. Elisha's prediction of victory over Syria (13:14-19)
 3. Elisha's death (13:20-21)
 4. Hazael's death (13:22-24)
 5. Jehoash's victories over Ben-hadad (13:25)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. God's anger was kindled against Israel under the rule of Jehoahaz. What punishment did he send upon the nation?

2. When Joash came to see the dying Elisha, why do you think he wept over him and said, "O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof"?

3. What are some ways a wholehearted spirit will be evidenced in the work of the Lord?

CONCLUSION

It is always best to follow God's instructions completely and with all of our hearts. We will not regret it!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.” (2 Kings 14:24)

Recently, a man from our church was sleeping deeply in the middle of the night when a panicked scream jarred him. Before he was completely awake, he jumped out of bed and burst into the hallway. There stood his teenage son, whimpering in fear, and still half asleep. “What’s wrong?” he demanded anxiously of his son. “There’s a snake in my bed!” the boy exclaimed wildly.

By this point, the father was fully awake and his son was starting to wake up as well. With heart still racing, the father reassured his son that of course there was no snake in the bed, and then went back to his own bed. Yet, while he lay there, his heart was still thundering in his chest. As he slowly relaxed, he pondered the event and his own reaction to it. Eventually he thought of the reaction people have to sin. Why is it that there isn’t such a reaction of disgust and fear when people encounter sin? Why don’t people scream in horror, and run or cry for help?

Clearly, sin is not as obvious as a snake, and since sin sometimes looks appealing, often people do not consider its consequences. However, the Jewish people knew the dangers of sin and God’s attitude toward it. Because of their heritage, they knew that sin caused death and destruction. So, why weren’t they horrified of sin? Why did they turn to idols instead of to God?

How about us? Are we horrified by the sin that we see around us? Living in a society where sin flourishes could cause us to become careless or indifferent to it, but we do not want that to be our reaction. We want to have the wisdom to see how deadly sin is, and to run from it in abhorrence, crying out to God for His strength and deliverance. We can learn a lesson from the young man who thought he had a snake in his bed!

BACKGROUND

King Amaziah of Judah served God, but not as devotedly as David, his forefather, had done. He regained control of Edom, which had been lost by a revolt under Jehoram (see chapter 8).

In verse 7, the “valley of salt” refers to a depression just below the Dead Sea. *Selah*, meaning “the rock,” may be a reference to the Nabatean capital of Petra, a city carved out of rocky cliffs. Amaziah

renamed the city *Joktheel*, which means “conquered by God.”

Amaziah was over-confident after his defeat of Edom. He foolishly challenged King Joash (also called Jehoash) of Israel to war, perhaps to show off his army. Joash warned Amaziah to simply stay home and said that he would surely be defeated—using the metaphor that Judah was a thistle and Israel a cedar tree. Amaziah refused to heed the warning and attacked on Judah’s own territory at Beth-shemesh, about fifteen miles west of Jerusalem. In the aftermath of being soundly defeated by Israel, Amaziah himself was temporarily taken captive, his palace and the Temple of God were spoiled, hostages were taken, and the city wall was broken down. This left the inhabitants of Jerusalem unprotected and disgraced.

Amaziah was the second king of Judah to die by conspiracy (verse 19). This conspiracy may have been caused by dissatisfaction with Amaziah after his senseless war with Israel. He fled to Lachish, a stronghold thirty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem, and was killed there. He was given a royal burial in Jerusalem. In contrast to the events in Israel, Judah always installed the son of the slain king as the new king. Amaziah’s son, Azariah, is also known as Uzziah.

In verse 23, the account moves from Amaziah’s reign in Judah to Jeroboam’s reign in Israel. Jeroboam was the last strong king of Israel. He did not follow God, yet he was a master war commander and skilled administrator, and caused Israel to flourish. During his reign, Israel enjoyed a prosperity and power that had not been since Solomon’s time. However, there was corruption within. The Prophets Amos and Hosea indicated that there was a lack of justice and fairness, causing those who were rich to get richer and those who were poor to become poorer. The nation became self-centered and self-dependent.

During this time of sin and moral decline in both Israel and Judah, several of the prophets, including Hosea, Amos, and Jonah, preached and wrote under God’s direction.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah
 - J. Amaziah of Judah (14:1-22)
 - 1. The character of Amaziah’s reign (14:1-4)
 - 2. The vengeance on his father’s slayers (14:5-6)
 - 3. The military exploits of Amaziah (14:7-14)

- a. His defeat of Edom (14:7)
 - b. His defeat by Jehoash of Israel (14:8-14)
 - (1) His challenge (14:8-10)
 - (2) His defeat (14:11-14)
- 4. The death of Amaziah (14:15-22)
 - a. The death of Jehoash (14:15-16)
 - b. The assassination of Amaziah (14:17-20)
 - c. The ascension of Uzziah (14:21-22)
- K. Jeroboam II of Israel (14:23-29)
 - 1. The character of Jeroboam's reign (14:23-27)
 - 2. The death of Jeroboam (14:28-29)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did Amaziah do to the children of the servants who had murdered his father?

2. Why do you think the people of Judah continued idol worship in the high places?

3. What is your reaction to sin? What should you do when faced with it?

CONCLUSION

Today, each of us can pray for a sensitive spirit, so we will not become indifferent or tolerant toward sin.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done; save that the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burnt incense still on the high places.” (2 Kings 15:3-4)

My husband and I have a good friend who shares our love for the Gospel. He is an outstanding carpenter and cabinet maker, and also a wonderful communicator. Although he is deaf, he never misses a word we say if we look at him when we speak. His replies and answers to questions asked verify the fact that he is also a master at lipreading.

Our friend is successful in communication and his business because he watches for every word. He is single-minded about getting the message. If he were to be distracted into watching what the neighbors are doing or the dog is chasing, he would miss our message.

In our focus verses we note that Azariah (also known as Uzziah) did what was right in God’s eyes, following his father’s example in serving the Lord. However, he was not listening intently to all that God had said. He was familiar with God’s instructions given in the Ten Commandments, as were the people of Judah. Yet, they were not giving all of God’s words strict attention, or the high places would have been removed, and the people would have gone to the Temple or to God’s appointed priests rather than making sacrifices and burning incense on the high places.

The people of Judah should have been reading God’s lips. He had given definite instructions to Moses years before, and Moses had passed on those instructions to the people. Fathers were told to place remembrances around their homes and to repeat God’s directions orally so that people would not forget His commandments. But the people of Judah had quit focusing on God, and therefore they were disobedient.

Many centuries have passed, but God has not changed. He still intends for us to listen to all of His instructions. It is imperative that we pay close attention and not allow ourselves to be distracted by the sin around us in this world. We can do this by making sure every area of our lives conforms to God’s Word and by opening our hearts to His directions.

BACKGROUND

Chapter 15 gives a summary of the reigns of King Azariah of Judah, and five kings of Israel: Zachariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, and Pekah.

The text begins with Azariah (meaning “the Lord has helped”) as king of Judah. His other name was Uzziah (meaning “the Lord has strengthened”). Azariah, considered in most ways a good king, started to reign when he was sixteen years old, ruling for over twenty years with Amaziah, his father. His total reign lasted fifty-two years. God helped him prosper as a farmer and as a military man. An account of his life, prosperity, and downfall is recorded in 2 Chronicles 26. The same chapter (verses 16-21) gives more details regarding Azariah’s sudden onset of leprosy as recorded in 2 Kings 15:5.

Lepers were not allowed to dwell with non-lepers or to enter the Temple for worship. When Azariah was smitten with leprosy for usurping the priests’ responsibilities, Jotham, Azariah’s son, was made a co-regent. For approximately ten years, Jotham carried on the king’s duties, and upon Azariah’s passing, Jotham became the king.

In verses 8-31, the text shifts back to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Zachariah was the king for six months, fulfilling God’s promise given generations earlier to Jehu, “Thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel” (2 Kings 10:30). Jehu was followed by Jehoahaz, Joash, Jeroboam II, and Zachariah. (See “The Divided Kingdom” timeline.)

Zachariah was assassinated by Shallum, who reigned for a month and then was killed by Menahem. Bible scholars believe that Menahem was a military commander under Jeroboam II and Zachariah. He demonstrated the cruelty shown by the people of Syria and Ammon (See 2 Kings 8:12 and Amos 1:13).

During the ten years that Menahem reigned, the Assyrians made their first invasion of Israel. In 743 B.C., the armies of Assyrian King Pul (also known as Tiglath-pileser III, verse 29), forced Israel to pay tribute. Menahem collected approximately two million dollars from sixty thousand of the wealthy people of the nation.

When Menahem died, his son Pekahiah was made king. After reigning two years, he was killed by Pekah, a captain in his army. Pekah and his associates were against submitting to Assyria, and formed a coalition with Syria. However, Tiglath-pileser invaded Israel again and took captives back to Assyria. Eight years after he killed Pekahiah, Pekah was killed by Hoshea, who was loyal to Assyria. Hoshea was the last king of Israel.

In verse 32, the focus moves back to Judah. Jotham began as a co-ruler with his father Azariah. He served God, but did not take away the high places.

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- 3.** What does this chapter teach us about partial obedience to God's Word?

[illegible]

God wants full-time obedience from His people.
Are we listening to His instructions today?

NOTES

[illegible]

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did the king of Assyria do after his first invasion of Israel?

2. Why do you suppose the high places continued to be left as areas of worship?



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And king Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and saw an altar that was at Damascus: and king Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the fashion of the altar, and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof.” (2 Kings 16:10)

Holding the plastic landing gear for a remote-control helicopter in the palm of his hand, our son, who is a designer for a precision mold company, said, “Hmm, some mold this part took!” If he had tried the part on his helicopter and it did not fit, he would have been suspicious that the mold used to make it had been faulty.

Most of us do not give thought to the molds that were utilized to form the plastic items we use so often—pens, plastic furniture, iPod cases, hair dryers, automobile interiors, cell phones, toys, medical parts, hand tools . . . an endless list. Because of our son’s profession, he knows the importance of meticulous accuracy down to a fraction of a millimeter. A plastic part for a blood-checking device must not vary more than .005 millimeters or the part won’t seal correctly and will not be usable. Since plastic parts are made by injecting melted plastic into a mold where the material hardens, it is vital that the mold be exact. If it is incorrect, every piece that comes out of it will be incorrect. Because the mold is the template, there is no hope of getting a satisfactory product from a faulty mold.

The same is true in a spiritual sense. Using the correct template is vital to success. In today’s text, Ahaz had an altar constructed in the Temple at Jerusalem. He patterned it after a pagan altar that he had seen in Damascus. The sacrifices offered on this new altar were not acceptable to God because Ahaz had ignored God’s instructions and used the wrong “template.”

In our time, the pattern of the world about us—its ideology, values, and way of life—will not result in a holy lifestyle. If we use those viewpoints as our template or mold, our lives will not be acceptable to God, and we will not have spiritual success. However, God’s Word contains clear instructions for us. If we follow Him in the way He prescribes, He will change our hearts, cause our lives to glorify Him, and give us eternal life.

BACKGROUND

This chapter is a summary of the reign of King Ahaz of Judah. Ahaz was twenty years old when he

began to reign. A phrase in verse 2 describes this man who was perhaps the worst king of Judah: he “did not that which was right in the sight of the LORD.” Ahaz had good examples in his lineage, both in his father Jotham and in his ancestor David, yet he not only rejected these godly examples, but he embraced the ungodly ways of the kings of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. This is the first recorded instance where Judah imitated Israel’s apostasy. Ahaz’s evil ways extended even to terrible forms of child sacrifice; he personally participated in the worship of Molech.

Verse 5 indicates that Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, came to Jerusalem to make war. Syria and Israel, as well as Judah, were under the control of the Assyrian Empire, but were not yet fully occupied. It is thought by historians that Rezin and Pekah attacked Judah to try and force Ahaz into an alliance with them, thinking that the three nations together could more effectively resist the resurgent power of the Assyrian Empire. However, the attempt by these two kings failed; they were not strong enough to defeat Jerusalem and overthrow the government of Ahaz.

God sent the Prophet Isaiah to offer Ahaz a reassurance of God’s help in the struggle against Israel and Syria (see Isaiah 7:1-12), but Ahaz refused, using the excuse that he did not want to test God. In reality, he really wanted to trust in the king of Assyria. He called upon the king of Assyria, Tiglath-pileser (or Pul), for help against these other two kings, and offered an incentive by sending him most of the treasure found in his house and the Temple. Essentially, this made Judah a subject kingdom to Assyria.

The king of Assyria responded by attacking Damascus and killing King Rezin. This chapter does not say what happened to King Pekah and Israel, but it would appear that they were no longer a major threat to Judah.

King Ahaz then went to Damascus to see King Tiglath-pileser in person. It was unusual for the kings of Judah to make official visits to other kingdoms, so this was likely an official act of submission from Ahaz to Tiglath-pileser. While he was there, he saw a pagan altar (historians indicate that the Assyrians set up altars to their gods in the territories they conquered). He had the dimensions and pertinent information sent home to Jerusalem and instructed the high priest, Urijah, to build a copy of it. When Ahaz returned to Jerusalem, he dedicated the altar by offering sacrifices on it.

It was a serious affront to God to replace the brazen altar, which had been built to God’s specific design, with one built after the fashion of a pagan altar.

3. What steps can we take to make sure that in a crisis we place our trust in God?

[illegible]

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- ## CONCLUSION

NOTES

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“For they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing.”
(2 Kings 17:12)**

As a child, I sometimes found it hard to obey what my parents told me to do. One particular instance of disobedience still lingers in my mind, more than four decades later.

My mother had some mementos from her childhood that she kept in a cupboard above our kitchen stove, and occasionally she would take them down and let us look at them. I loved Mom’s beautiful glass knick-knacks and childhood treasures, and would often beg to see them. My parents realized there could be a temptation for me to try to get the treasures on my own, so they stressed many times that I was never to climb on the stove and get into the things on the shelf. They knew that would be very dangerous for a child of my age, and they made sure I understood that I was not to disobey them—and that there would be consequences if I did!

Sometimes when my mom was busy in the back rooms of the house, I would pull a chair over by the stove and stand on it, looking up at the forbidden cupboard. Once I even put my foot on the stove and started to climb up, but my sister heard me and said she would tell Mom if I didn’t get down. One day, however, my sister was out in the barn with Dad, and Mom was busy away from the kitchen. After checking to make sure the coast was clear, I quickly pushed a chair next to the stove and climbed up onto it. I knew very well that I was being disobedient, and my heart was pounding, but I stepped up onto the stove. Then I reached inside the cupboard and took out a small ceramic dog. It was beautiful! I was so engrossed in looking at that dog that I didn’t hear the front door open. A moment later I heard my dad’s booming voice—and I knew in an instant that my disobedience had been found out!

The resulting discipline was necessary and deserved. Dad wanted to be sure I never climbed on the stove again—he knew I could burn myself if an element had been left on, or I could fall off and get hurt. He loved me and so he wanted me to be safe. And he wanted to remind me of the consequences of disobedience! It was successful; as far as I can remember, I never climbed on the stove again.

In our devotional text we see a disobedient Israel worshipping idols; totally ignoring God’s command to

worship only Him. God had sent prophet after prophet and punishment after punishment to try and turn Israel away from sin and back to Himself, but the people would not listen. Israel refused to obey, so eventually God permitted Assyria to conquer Israel, lead the people into captivity, and settle the land with foreigners.

Let us learn a lesson from the disobedience of Israel! Rebelling against God’s instructions will bring discipline and eventual judgment. Today, may we purpose in our hearts to pay close attention to His Word and be careful to obey Him in every matter. We will be blessed if we do!

BACKGROUND

This chapter provides an account of how Israel, the Northern Kingdom of ten tribes, was carried into captivity. Hoshea, the last king to reign in Israel, governed the Northern Kingdom for nine years. By then, the kingdom was in a weakened state. King Hoshea paid an annual tribute to Shalmaneser, the king of Assyria. After six years, Hoshea rebelled against Assyria and sought help from Egypt. In retaliation, Shalmaneser had Hoshea imprisoned. With no real leader for Israel, the Assyrians moved through the land, taking cities, until they arrived at Samaria. They besieged Samaria for three years, and eventually captured it. The Assyrians then carried away most of the people, and resettled the land with foreigners.

The reasons for the Israelites’ punishment are given in this chapter. Verse 7 indicates they had sinned against God by forgetting His mercy in delivering them from oppression in Egypt. Verse 8 tells that they had followed the evil example of the heathen people around them, so that the true worship of God was corrupted by idolatrous practices. Verses 13-18 reveal that they had ignored the preachings of the prophets and rejected the law of God. They completely rebelled against the Lord who loved them so much, becoming empty and vain just like the false idols they worshiped. Verses 16 and 17 describe the extent of Israel’s pagan worship. The people worshiped calves, one at Dan and one at Bethel. They also had a grove where they prayed to idols and worshiped Baal along with the sun, moon, and stars. They burned their own children on altars to honor these gods, consulted fortune tellers, and used black magic and the occult, totally selling themselves to evil.

With the Northern Kingdom of Israel in captivity, only Judah was left. However, Judah also turned away from God in disobedience. She was guilty of the same sins as Israel, and needed to repent. Sadly, Judah

also refused to ask for forgiveness and obey God's commandments, so 136 years later the people of the Southern Kingdom were also taken away from the land God had given them and placed among strangers in Babylon.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah
 - T. Hoshea of Israel
 - 1. The character of Hoshea's reign (17:1-2)
 - 2. The conspiracy of Hoshea (17:3-4)
 - 3. The invasion and captivity of Israel (17:5-6)
 - 4. The cause of Israel's captivity (17:7-23)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How did God try to get the Israelites' attention when they went into idol worship?

2. Why do you think the people of Judah failed to learn from the example of Israel, and went on in rebellion and disobedience?

3. What are some steps we can take to avoid the snare of disobedience to God?

CONCLUSION

Disobedience to God is dangerous. Though judgment may be deferred for a time, it will come. There are eternal consequences for not following God's commands!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“But the LORD your God ye shall fear; and he shall deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies.”
(2 Kings 17:39)**

An inexperienced driver, high speeds, wet roads, and a dash of alcohol. Young children playing with matches. Greasy carnival food and too many rides on the roller coaster. We call these combinations “a recipe for disaster” because when certain factors are combined, we know problems will result.

Disobedience, unbelief, idolatry—the spiritual components present in the land of Israel—were a recipe for disaster. This was not because the people of Israel did not know better. Today’s focus verse contains a “recipe for success” that had been given to them centuries before, and through the years, faithful men of God had reminded them of this precept.

The people of Israel were blessed during the righteous reign of King David. However, in the later years of King Solomon, as his heart was turned away from the Lord to other gods, the nation began to be infected by idolatry. Consequently, God divided the nation. Ten tribes formed the Northern Kingdom under King Jeroboam.

Even though the Lord told Jeroboam that He was dividing the kingdom because of Solomon’s idolatry, Jeroboam created his own religious system with elements from both Jewish and pagan beliefs. Consequently, this essentially pagan form of worship became the religion of the nation of Israel. There was only a pretense that they were still serving the living God.

Two hundred years and twenty kings later, disobedience, unbelief, and idolatry prevailed in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. God had sent His Prophets Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Hosea, and undoubtedly many others to plead with and warn the people to stay true to Jehovah. Yet there were false prophets telling the people they must be tolerant, be willing to accept diversity, be ready to adopt new ways. The majority of the people apparently believed these fake prophets, because the nation embraced idolatry, and eventually God removed Israel from the Promised Land, as He had said He would if they disobeyed. The recipe for disaster produced ruinous results.

Just as the Israelites did, people today also make a choice between a recipe for disaster and one for spiritual success. If we will fear the Lord and obey His Word, He has promised to deliver us from the

enemy of our souls, to be with us, to help and guide us, and eventually to give us eternal life. We can learn a lesson about what not to do from Israel, and we can purpose to follow God with all our hearts. It’s a sure recipe for success!

BACKGROUND

Today’s text describes the resettlement of Israel. When the Assyrians conquered an area, they would force the local inhabitants to relocate in other countries. Then Assyria brought in captives from other areas to live in the newly conquered land. This prevented nationalities from uniting and rebelling, for they were spread apart from each other and far from their homelands.

The new inhabitants of Israel were brought from locations to the east and the north. Cuthah was near Babylon. Ava, Hamath, and Sepharvaim were probably cities in Syria. Samaria (verse 24) referred to the land of Israel, not just the capital city, and Samaritans (verse 29) were the Israelites who were still there. In time, the families of the Israelites who stayed behind married into the families of those who were brought in, and eventually these racially mixed people were called Samaritans and were hated by the Jews.

Repopulating took time, and meanwhile, wild animals increased. When lions killed some of the colonists, they acknowledged it was God’s judgment against them. They asked for a priest who understood how to serve the “God of the land.” One of the priests that had been taken captive was sent back, but he probably was one who had been involved in Israel’s idolatry. The people from these various locations combined the worship of God with worship of their own idols, several of which are listed in the text. This resulted in extreme heathen practices that continued until the time of the writing of 2 Kings.

Verses 34-39 reiterate the commandments God had given the Israelites and reference how He had worked miracles on their behalf. “Howbeit they did not hearken” (verse 40), and their ungodly ways were passed down from one generation to another.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah
 - T. Hoshea of Israel
 - 5. The colonization of Samaria (17:24-41)
 - a. The origin of the Samaritans (17:24-26)
 - b. The syncretism of the Samaritans (17:27-41)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Who became the priests for the people who settled in the land of northern Israel?

2. Why do you think the people of Israel continually ignored God's warnings?

3. Syncretism is the combination of different forms of belief or practice. How might we be influenced to combine something else with the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

CONCLUSION

If we follow God's recipe for success, we will be well-pleased with the results.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand? But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king’s commandment was, saying, Answer him not.”
(2 Kings 18:35-36)

It was the 1930s, and business trends were still headed downward. There was rumor of upcoming salary cuts at the New York insurance office where a twenty-two-year-old clerk worked. Possessor of a deep, melodious voice, the young man was offered a radio contract. There was opportunity for fame and great financial gain if he would agree to regular performance on a secular program.

George had one request. He was a Christian, and he wanted to glorify God by singing; he asked that he might sing Gospel songs. In response, the radio station told him that he must sing the popular music of the day, but could occasionally slip in a Gospel tune.

The young man had been pondering the matter for several days when he sat down at the piano early one Sunday to rehearse a hymn he was to sing in church. As he played, his mother (who had been earnestly praying for him to be fully consecrated to God’s plan for his life) slipped him a piece of paper upon which was written a poem by Rhea Miller called “I’d Rather Have Jesus.” In a few moments, his fingers unconsciously left the tune he was rehearsing and began to find the melody which is known today to millions.

The words hit their mark. The young man turned down the secular contract, and a short time later he was offered a position with a Chicago radio station where he could sing the Gospel songs he loved. While there, he met Billy Graham, and that was the beginning of George Beverly Shea’s sixty-year association with the Billy Graham evangelistic outreach.

George Beverly Shea faced a choice about whether to sign an appealing contract or to follow his conscience. In our text, the people of Judah also faced a choice. They were besieged, cut off from food, encompassed by an army, and standing alone in a conquered land. The enemy offered them safety, horses, and land rich with food resources. All they had to do was surrender. How did they respond to this offer? They “held their peace, and answered him not a word,” choosing to follow the instructions of their king, and trust in God’s promises and obey His will.

In our lives there may be times when we face choices. Maybe we will have opportunities that promise wealth and worldly success, like George Beverly Shea. Or we may be offered an enticing alternative to God’s will, as were the people of Judah. What will our response be?

God has promised us deliverance during trials, guidance throughout our lives, and an eternity with Him in Heaven. These are not empty promises. If we choose His will, we will be choosing God’s best for our lives.

BACKGROUND

Hezekiah became Judah’s king and reigned for twenty-nine years as the best king Judah had seen, or would see. He had previously reigned with his father for thirteen years. The phrase “He reigned twenty and nine years” refers to his reign after his father died, when he immediately began turning the nation back to godly ways. He made the Prophet Isaiah a close adviser. As well as destroying the idolatrous forms of worship, Hezekiah stood up to the Assyrians and refused to pay the tribute that his father, Ahaz, had begun.

With Israel gone into captivity, Judah was left alone to face the Assyrians. In 701 B.C. King Sennacherib began an invasive march down through western Judah. Assyria’s destruction of Lachish, a city thirty miles southwest of Jerusalem, was such an important military success that royal artists carved a relief depicting the victory on the wall of Sennacherib’s palace. This relief is one of the most important archeological finds from the ancient Middle East. Lachish became a staging area for attacking a number of Judah’s cities, including Jerusalem itself.

After the fall at Lachish, Hezekiah attempted to end the Assyrian threat himself. Instead of turning to Isaiah and ultimately to God for help, he sent tribute to Sennacherib with an apology for his earlier refusal to pay as his father had, taking gold from the Temple to facilitate the payment. However, the attempted bribe did not work. Sennacherib took the money, and marched toward Jerusalem anyway.

The Assyrian commander, Rabshakeh, stopped at the aqueduct of the upper pool on the road to the fuller’s field. This place had significance because it was the exact spot where Isaiah had confronted Ahaz, Hezekiah’s father. Ahaz had refused to trust the Lord and had chosen instead to make a treaty with Assyria. Now the Assyrians were ready to invade Jerusalem, and Hezekiah was faced with the same message of deliverance from the same man of God.

The ambassadors from Assyria hoped to convince the people of Judah to surrender without fighting. They appealed to Jerusalem, a starving city under siege, by offering food, land, and horses if they would surrender. Rabshakeh accused Hezekiah of offending God by tearing down the altars in the hills. He completely misinterpreted Hezekiah's reform, which sought to eliminate idol worship that occurred mainly in the hills.

Sennacherib mocked Judah's king, mocked their God, and even went so far as to say that the very God they served had sent him. He was a master of fighting a war of propaganda, challenging Judah to decide who they were going to trust.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The reigns of the kings of Judah
 - A. Hezekiah
 - 1. The character of Hezekiah's reign (18:1-8)
 - 2. The fall of the Northern Kingdom (18:9-12)
 - 3. The siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib
 - a. The invasion of Judah (18:13-16)
 - b. The message of Rabshakeh (18:17-25)
 - c. The insults of Rabshakeh (18:26-37)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why didn't the people on the wall of Jerusalem reply to the Assyrian field commander when he spoke to them?

2. Why would it be useful for an enemy to undermine your confidence in your leaders?

3. What can you do to make certain you are following God's will when decisions come your way?

CONCLUSION

All of us are faced with choices. God's best is found in choosing to follow Him and His will for our lives.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Now therefore, O LORD our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD God, even thou only.” (2 Kings 19:19)

During World War II, while on a special mission Eddie Rickenbacker was in an airplane that crashed in the Pacific Ocean. For twenty-four days, the eight men from that plane drifted in three rafts. At the outset, they had just four oranges, so food and water were soon critical issues.

One of the men had a New Testament. In his book *Seven Came Through*, Rickenbacker wrote, “Watching him read it, the thought came to me that we might all profit by his example . . . With the New Testament as an inspiration, we held morning and evening prayers.”

From the second to the eighth day, the sea was perfectly calm, and the sun burned down on them relentlessly. It became clear that unless the weather changed or they obtained food and water soon, death was imminent.

About an hour after their devotions on the eighth day, as Rickenbacker was dozing with his hat pulled over his eyes, a seagull landed on his hat. Very carefully he reached up and grabbed the bird, which they used for food and bait to catch two fish.

That night, there were indications of rain and they felt a few drops. Then they saw a squall and paddled toward it. Rickenbacker wrote, “I prayed to God to put us in its path.” God answered, and that night the rain poured down upon them.

Through these and a number of other miracles, seven men lived through the experience. They honored God, and He rescued them marvelously. In our text today, King Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem were being threatened by the King of Assyria, and avoiding disaster seemed impossible. Yet, they cried out to God for help, and He gave them a miraculous deliverance.

At times in our lives we may face situations that appear to have no possible or good resolution. However, by considering God’s intervention for the men in the rafts and also for the people of Jerusalem, we are reminded that God can do the impossible. Miraculous help is within His power. Like the people of old, we want to take our problems to God, and let Him resolve them.

BACKGROUND

Chapter 18 closes with the verbal harassment of the Assyrian emissaries against the people in Jerusalem. When Hezekiah heard about Rabshakeh’s blasphemous speech, he was deeply distressed. He put on sackcloth (coarse fabric made from camel or goat hair that was worn to indicate grief and humility) and went to the Temple. He sent Eliakim and Shebna, who had heard Rabshakeh, and some of the priests to Isaiah the prophet to petition his prayers.

“The remnant that are left” (chapter 19, verse 4) refers to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The ten tribes making up the Northern Kingdom of Israel had been conquered and taken into captivity. Assyria had also overcome many of Judah’s outlying cities.

In verses 6-7, Isaiah responded to Hezekiah’s messengers with a promise from God for deliverance.

Because he had heard rumor of an attack by Ethiopia, Sennacherib sent Hezekiah a blasphemous letter in an effort to make him surrender (verses 10-13). By mentioning both conquered locations and kings, it was implied that Hezekiah was personally in danger. Even more importantly, he intimated that God himself was weak and unable to deliver His people.

Hezekiah responded by going to the Temple and spreading the letter before the Lord. His prayer was profound and exemplary.

- He acknowledged God as the Creator and sovereign over the whole earth.
- He stated the facts—Sennacherib had reproached God, and had also overcome other countries because their gods “were no gods.”
- He asked God to deliver Jerusalem so that His Name would be glorified.

God’s reply, delivered through Isaiah, is recorded in verses 21-34. It included a rebuke to Sennacherib—quoting his own words (verses 23-24), reminding him that his victories were allowed by God (verses 25-26), and predicting his judgment (verses 27-28). The Assyrians were known for their cruelty and they intended to abuse the Jewish people, but God said He would turn it around and put His “hook in thy nose.”

Verses 29-34 contain the promise to Hezekiah and the people of Judah. God promised to deliver the city without an arrow being shot in it.

The conclusion of the chapter tells how an angel from God slew 185,000 men of Assyria’s army. And Sennacherib’s sons killed him after he returned home to Nineveh.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The reigns of the kings of Judah
 - A. Hezekiah
 - 3. The siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib
 - d. The counsel of Hezekiah with Isaiah (19:1-7)
 - (1) Hezekiah's message to Isaiah (19:1-5)
 - (2) Isaiah's reply (19:6-7)
 - e. Sennacherib's message to Hezekiah (19:8-34)
 - (1) The message (19:8-13)
 - (2) The prayer of Hezekiah (19:14-19)
 - (3) The answer through Isaiah (19:20-34)
 - f. The defeat and death of Sennacherib (19:35-37)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How do you think the fearful messengers responded to the words of Isaiah on their way to report back to Hezekiah?

2. What did Hezekiah do with Sennacherib's letter after reading it?

3. Describe a time when God has given you a mighty deliverance.

CONCLUSION

Whatever circumstances we may face, we can pour out our pleas to God and know that He is able to work marvelously in our behalf.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD.”
(2 Kings 20:5)**

When we face times of crisis in life, it is wonderful to be able to pray and to know that God has heard our prayers. Some years ago, a young mother in our congregation learned that she had melanoma cancer, and it had spread all through her body. She said, “I remember the day the doctor looked at me with tears running down his face, and said, ‘Young lady, you had better get a lifeline to God and hold on.’ The medical professionals didn’t know what they could do for me, but I wasn’t looking to this world for my help. I was looking to Jesus Christ.

“There were hard times when I looked at my children and thought, I want to raise them. At a very low time when I was in a lot of pain, I prayed, ‘Lord, I don’t have what it takes to receive that blessing from You, but I need it.’ We were traveling in a car, and as I looked up, there was a sign on the side of the road which said: Limited Access Area. The sign pertained to the highway, but the message immediately went into my soul. In a very definite way the Lord spoke to my heart, ‘There are no limited access areas where My power is concerned.’ From that point on, I knew that the Lord was going to heal me.” God did heal her, she lived to raise her children, and now this lady is a grandmother.

In today’s text, when Hezekiah learned that he was going to die, he turned his face to the wall and prayed. God heard him and answered by extending his life and also promising to deliver Judah from the Assyrians.

Each of us can have this same knowledge that God hears our prayers and sees our tears. When circumstances seem out of control and overwhelming, He wants us to look to Him. In the day-to-day small matters also, He hears our petitions, and offers His aid. What a comfort this can be! Knowing that He loves us and sees what is best for us can help in the ordinary to the most challenging experiences of life.

BACKGROUND

At the age of twenty-five, when Hezekiah began to reign, he started a moral reform in the nation of

Judah that included removal of the high places, destruction of the idols the people had been worshiping, and laying waste the groves that had been grown for the various false gods. King Hezekiah wanted to turn the hearts of the Children of Israel back to the God of their forefathers, and was instrumental in bringing about a return to the true worship of God.

Chapter 20 opens with a message from the Prophet Isaiah telling King Hezekiah to get his house in order because his current illness would take his life. Since Hezekiah reigned a total of twenty-nine years, and God added fifteen years to his life after this incident, it is clear that this event transpired in the fourteenth year of his reign. The attack by Sennacherib took place when Hezekiah had reigned fourteen years (2 Kings 18:13), so Bible scholars believe that this illness must have been right before Sennacherib was defeated.

When Hezekiah heard Isaiah’s pronouncement, he “wept sore” (verse 3) and recounted his faithfulness before God. He may have felt that his death would leave Judah in jeopardy of being invaded by the Assyrians, and also bring a halt to the religious reform he had instituted. God answered his prayer and promised to add fifteen years to his life. In addition, God promised deliverance from Assyria.

God confirmed His promise with a sign: the shadow of the sun moved back ten degrees. The text implies some form of a time-keeping device. While its actual design is unknown, possibly the sundial was a pillar whose shadow marked the hours on a set of stairs. Historians are unsure as to the physical alterations God made—whether the return of the sun was caused by a reverse in the earth’s rotation or by some other geophysical means. However, there can be no doubt that a supernatural miracle was involved in this event.

The visit of the emissary from Babylon was professed to be a result of Hezekiah’s healing. However, historians think the true intent was to incite Hezekiah to revolt against Assyria. Hezekiah warmly greeted these ambassadors, and with little thought to his nation’s security, took them on a grand tour of Judah’s treasures and armories. Hezekiah’s response to the rebuke of Isaiah (verse 19) can be taken in two ways. Perhaps it displayed a self-focused perspective: instead of regret for the coming judgment against his nation, he noted that at least during his lifetime he would enjoy peace. Or maybe he felt that because God was delaying judgment, there would be more time for the people of Judah to repent.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE *Hannah's Bible Outlines*
Used by permission per WORDsearch

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

A. Hezekiah

- ## A CLOSER LOOK

[illegible][illegible]

Life will present us with opportunities to look to God. We can know that when we do, He hears our prayers and His answer is coming.

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.” (2 Kings 21:6)

Kathy attended church as a child, but when she was in her teens she rebelled against her early training and began dabbling in the Wicca religion. “I was always kind of artsy, different, and non-conformist,” Kathy acknowledges. “Wicca attracted my interest because it appealed to those facets of my personality.”

However, Kathy’s interest in the occult and witchcraft led to a terrifying experience. One hot summer night, a cold wind suddenly blew into her bedroom windows. Terrified, she hugged her knees to her chest and gasped as a swarm of what she can only describe as “black demons” encircled her head. She screamed out her Wiccan spells, hoping that would make the demons disappear, but it only made things worse. They simply shrieked and yelled and laughed at her.

Then Kathy remembered her days in Sunday school, and the teachings of Jesus. Something inside her said that was where she would find help. “In a loud voice I called upon Jesus Christ to rid the room of this dark presence,” she recounts. “Instantly the demons were gone, and my bedroom was once again calm and warm.” Realizing that she had stepped to the very brink of disaster, Kathy walked into a church the next day, determined to live her life for God. Now as a Christian, Kathy warns people who are experimenting with Wicca and other pagan practices of its terrible danger.¹

Such warnings need to be given in the world today, because witchcraft, magic, sorcery, and other similar practices are sky-rocketing in popularity. Many books, television programs, and games deal with fortune-telling, séances, and other occult practices. There is a growing interest in astrology, alchemy, divination, and magic based on “hidden knowledge” about the universe and its mysterious forces.

In spite of their rapidly-increasing following, occultic practices are not new. In our text today, Judah’s evil ruler, Manasseh, had turned away from the God of his father, Hezekiah. Our key verse indicates that his sins included fortune-telling, enchantments, and the use of mediums and wizards. He restored the worship of Baal, and even sacrificed his own son to the Ammonite god, Molech. Tragically, through the

influence of Manasseh, the people of Judah became even more evil than the nations they had destroyed at God’s command.

We must not let an interest in knowing the future, or a casual supposition that superstitious practices are harmless, lead us into having anything to do with occult practices. The spirit world is deceptive, dangerous, and completely opposed to Christianity. Let’s be aware, and stand up against this ungodly influence in our society!

BACKGROUND

Today’s chapter deals with the apostasy of King Hezekiah’s son, Manasseh, and Manasseh’s son, Amon. Manasseh reigned for fifty-five years, the longest reign of any of Judah’s kings. His name means “he causes to forget” and this is appropriate, for his evil reign caused Judah to forget the godly influence of Hezekiah.

Manasseh began his reign at age twelve, and likely was influenced by groups who were angered by the godly reforms of Hezekiah. As a result, Manasseh showed utter disregard for his religious training, and in fact went beyond any previous king of Judah in his wickedness. During his reign, Judah became even more heathen than the nations that the Israelites had destroyed on their journey to the Promised Land under the leadership of Moses and Joshua.

Several specific sins were mentioned in this chapter, including idol worship and occultism. According to the Septuagint, the “familiar spirits” referred to in verse 6 may have been ventriloquists, who pretended to ask counsel of the dead and gave the response supposedly received. The “wizards” were men who claimed ability to reveal secrets, recover lost or hidden items, and give the meaning of dreams. A great influx of these pretenders had, at various times, come from Chaldea into Israel, where they could pursue their “trade” as a gainful occupation.

Manasseh restored the worship of Baal, Asherah (Baal’s consort), and astrological deities, even erecting altars to them in the Temple. He sacrificed his own son by fire to Molech, an Ammonite god connected with demonism. Furthermore, he abused countless innocent souls, probably prophets and those who opposed his religious policies. According to Jewish tradition, Manasseh ordered that the Prophet Isaiah be sawn in two with a wood saw when he attempted to hide in a hollow log.

As a result of Judah’s sin, God promised that judgment would come. It would be so severe that the

ears of anyone who heard of it would “tingle,” or hurt as if from a sharp, discordant note. Using two standards of a builder (verse 13), the “line of Samaria” and “plummet of the house of Ahab” metaphorically established the standard of judgment. The nation of Judah was to be punished with as much severity as Samaria (the nation of Israel) and Ahab (the former king of Israel). “Turning it upside down” pictured the depopulation of Judah, which would be emptied by its captors.

Although Manasseh repented later in life and turned toward God (recorded in 2 Chronicles), his repentance is not mentioned in this chapter. His change of heart did not reverse the course of Judah that had been established by the devastation of his evil reign, and the people progressively gave themselves over to pagan forms of worship.

Manasseh’s son Amon reigned for only two years, and continued the evil of his father’s reign. Though the reason for his assassination is not given, Amon died at the hands of his servants and not from a overthrow by the people of the land.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The reigns of the kings of Judah
 - B. Manasseh (21:1-18)
 - 1. The character of Manasseh’s reign (21:1-9)
 - 2. The word of the Lord against Manasseh’s evil (21:10-15)
 - 3. The death of Manasseh (21:16-18)
 - C. Amon (21:19-26)
 - 1. The character of Amon’s reign (21:19-22)
 - 2. The conspiracy against Amon (21:23-26)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. To which king of Israel was Manasseh compared?

2. Why do you think that even though Hezekiah was one of the most righteous kings of Judah, his son Manasseh was one of the most wicked?

3. What aspects of our society parallel the wickedness that was a part of Manasseh’s reign?

4. What can we do to resist the forces of evil that would pull our world into a downward spiral of wickedness similar to Judah’s?

CONCLUSION

Interest in the occult, witchcraft, enchantments, and astrology is on the rise today, but God’s Word emphatically warns against experimenting with them.

NOTES

1. Catherine Sanders, “Breaking the Spell: The Hidden Traps of Wicca,” *Focus on the Family*, pgs. 10-12.



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“And Shaphan the scribe shewed the king, saying, Hilkiyah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes.”
(2 Kings 22:10-11)**

When he was eight years old, Josiah became the king of Judah. At the age of twenty-six, he encountered the Word of God in a life- and nation-changing way. When he heard God’s instructions and knew Judah had disobeyed them, he immediately felt concerned and grief-stricken. He sought counsel on what to do and heeded the warnings, and he brought repentance and renewal to his people.

God’s Word makes an impact. Consider the story of Cal Wolf. As a boy, Cal lived on a sheep ranch in Wyoming. Many times he felt emptiness in his heart and wondered why he was born. Because nature was so well-regulated and beautiful, he knew there was a God, but he had no religious training.

In 1941, he joined the United States Navy and soon was assigned to the USS Enterprise, an aircraft carrier which was headed for the South Pacific. While he was on that ship, God began to enlighten him. Cal said, “Sitting at my battle station day after day, I watched a young man reading his Bible. He had been a card shark, winning money from the other fellows, but I noticed that his language had changed. He was a new person. I could not understand the peace that was on his face. He had a New Testament, and as he read, he underlined verses.

“I was stationed a little higher than he in the gun director. One day when he closed his eyes, I looked over his shoulder and read the Scripture he had underlined. It said, ‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life’ (John 3:16). I had never dreamed that God had a Son! But that day, God began to show me that my problems were caused by a sinful heart and that I should give my heart to Him.

“A few months later, a string of dive bombers were coming at us, one after another. I knew that any moment could be my last, and I was not ready to meet God. I ran into the optical shop, threw myself on the deck, and began to cry to God. I was sorry for every sin I had ever committed and told Him I wanted to live right. As quickly as you could snap your fingers,

peace came into my heart. It felt as though a load rolled off my back.”

God spared Cal Wolf’s life that day, and he served God until his death many decades later. Like King Josiah, Cal took action when he encountered the Word of God. Both men chose to follow the instructions that they learned. Many of us have heard and read the Bible for years. Yet we also have a responsibility to act upon and obey what it says day by day. We will benefit if we learn from these men and live as God wants us to.

BACKGROUND

This chapter starts the account of Josiah’s reign, including his instituting of Temple repairs, finding the book of the Law, and his reaction to its contents.

Josiah was made king at eight years of age because his father was assassinated, and he reigned thirty-one years. His guardians and advisors, including his mother and grandmother who are both mentioned in the first verse of this chapter, desired that Judah would follow God. It is likely that they had an important role in shaping Josiah’s heart and directing him as a young king. When he was sixteen years old (2 Chronicles 34:3), he sought God for himself. Like his great-grandfather Hezekiah, he was outstanding in his service to God.

Despite his youth, Josiah’s faithfulness was evidenced by multiple actions. Initially, it was under his direction that the Temple restoration began. During the reigns of his father and grandfather, the Temple had been misused. Also, Hezekiah had taken Temple articles to pay Sennacherib tribute, so the Temple was in need of work. The fact that the book of the Law was lost in the Temple was in itself a sign that both it and the country were in disrepair. (Deuteronomy 31 contains instructions to keep the book of the Law next to the ark of the covenant, and Deuteronomy 17 directs each king to have a copy of it.)

The book of the Law that was found could have been the whole Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) or just Deuteronomy. Some Bible scholars believe it was a copy that dated back to the time of Moses and may have even been signed by him. Because of the reference made to judgment, it is thought that either Leviticus 26 or Deuteronomy 28 was read to Josiah.

Josiah responded to what he heard from the book of the Law. He believed that it was true, that God would do what He said He would, and that as the

In Old Testament times, most of the prophets were men; Huldah was one of the few women. “The college” was probably the lower part of Jerusalem, a residential area between the inner and outer walls. Huldah confirmed that Judah would be judged for its wickedness, but she said it would not happen while Josiah was still alive.

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

D. Josiah

1. The character of Josiah's reign (22:1-2)
2. The revival during Josiah's reign
 - a. The setting (22:3-20)
 - (1) The reconstruction of the Temple (22:3-7)
 - (2) The recovery of the Law (22:8-13)
 - (3) The prophecy of Huldah (22:14-20)

1. Who was the high priest when the book of the Law was found?

[illegible]

No matter what our age, position, or vocation, we have the great privilege in our access to the Word of God. We each must choose how we will respond.

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant.” (2 Kings 23:3)

As I consider our focus verse, I have a personal reason to thank God for those who have made a covenant “to walk after the LORD.” Like so many others, I have benefited from someone in my family making that commitment.

When my grandmother was a young woman, she was saved in a revival service in the small rural community where she lived. From that day forward, she determined to serve God. She would testify, “When God saved me, He took out the longing for the things of the world. I used to love the shows, the card parties, and the dances, as I was brought up that way. But in a moment of time, the Lord took the very desire for those things out of my heart. I was so surprised, because I did not know the way, but when I got honest in my heart, God did that wonderful thing for me.”

As my grandmother grew as a Christian, she longed for a deeper walk with the Lord, so she started searching for a church she believed followed the whole Word of God. This entailed her going to nearly every traveling revival service that came to her community. She always followed the same pattern. She would get the doctrines of the people she had just heard and take them home with her. Then she would get down beside her bed, open her Bible, and ask God to show her the truth. God was faithful, and it seemed He always showed her to keep looking.

Then one day she heard of the Apostolic Faith Church. When she compared the doctrines taught by this organization to the Word of God, she realized she had found what she was looking for! She cast her lot with these people, and as a result, my mother was brought up in this Gospel and turned her own life over to the Lord. She married my father, who was also a Christian, so I too had the privilege of being raised in a godly home. Now my wife and I are doing our best to pass that same heritage on to our sons. What a blessing the covenant my grandmother made with God has been to our family through the generations!

In today’s text, King Josiah was taking the lead in making a covenant to serve God and live by the

words in His Book. Josiah’s decisive action had an impact, for we read that all the people “stood to the covenant,” indicating their intention to be obedient to God by standing to their feet.

Have you made a covenant to walk after the Lord and keep His commandments? If you will continue to follow Him and obey His Word, your commitment will be an example and encouragement to others to do the same.

BACKGROUND

This chapter continues the account, begun in chapter 22, of the righteous reign of King Josiah. After the discovery of the book of the Law, and learning from the Prophetess Huldah that God’s wrath had been kindled against Judah, Josiah took on the challenging task of attempting to eradicate idol worship from Judah.

Verses 1-3 relate that Josiah called the people together to hear the reading of the book of the Law. The account states that he “stood by a pillar”; the fact that his location is specifically mentioned may indicate that this was an official place or platform from which rulers made decrees. The phrase “stood to the covenant” means that the people confirmed publicly their intention to abide by the king’s declaration.

Verses 4-20 deal mainly with Josiah’s destruction of the high places of idolatry in Judah (a fulfillment of 1 Kings 13:2). His first act was to command the priests to purge the Temple of all the vessels that had been used in idol worship. He removed the idolatrous priests who burned incense to Baal and various pagan deities; he burned the “grove” that Manasseh had set up (see 2 Kings 21:7), which included the image of the female goddess Asherah; and he broke down the “high places,” or shrines, where idolatrous worship took place. The phrase “he defiled Topheth” (verse 10) means that he destroyed the image of Molech, and polluted the area where the idol had stood to the extent that Jewish people would forever regard the place as abominable.

In verses 21-23, Josiah reinstated the observance of the Passover, the most significant of the annual feasts commanded by God. Since this commemoration pointed back to God’s deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt, it was a clear confirmation of Josiah’s purpose to obey the newly found Law, and a reminder to the inhabitants of Judah that they were God’s chosen people.

The remainder of the text covers the further reforms of Josiah and his untimely death as a result of

a complicated international situation. Tragically, the religious revival that sprang up under the influence of this righteous king did not continue after his death. God's wrath had been pronounced upon Judah and Josiah's death was the beginning of the end for the Southern Kingdom.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The reigns of the kings of Judah
 - D. Josiah
 - 2. The revival during Josiah's reign
 - b. The revival (23:1-27)
 - (1) The public reading of the Law (23:1-2)
 - (2) The public covenant with the Lord (23:3)
 - (3) The repression of idolatry (23:4-20)
 - (4) The celebration of the Passover (23:21-23)
 - (5) The further reforms of Josiah (23:24-25)
 - (6) The imminent captivity (23:26-27)
 - 3. The death of Josiah (23:28-30)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Whom did King Josiah command to remove the idols from the Temple of the Lord?

2. What do you think prompted a very young king to attempt to turn around a wayward country?

3. In what ways has someone who made a commitment to follow God been an influence in your life?

CONCLUSION

When we take a resolute stand for God and make a commitment to follow Him, others will be encouraged to make the same commitment.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servants the prophets.” (2 Kings 24:2)

An object lesson that I have never forgotten was given in Sunday school when I was young. Our teacher related a story about a farmer who told his son to pound a nail into the barn door every time he did something wrong. After hammering nails into a piece of wood to illustrate, our teacher continued the narrative. He said that one day the boy looked at the barn door and felt ashamed of the ugly nails that marred its surface, so he asked his dad how he could get rid of them. The father told his son he could start removing a nail every time he did something good. Before long, the last nail was taken out of the door. Removing the nails from the board, our teacher showed us that although every nail was gone, the holes remained. He was not suggesting that we can compensate for sins by doing something good. Rather, he made the point that the scars of sin may remain in our lives, even after we have asked God for forgiveness and are saved and doing right.

Our teacher wanted us to understand that sin has consequences. In contrast to the boy in the object lesson who felt remorseful for his deeds, the kings and people of the nation of Judah as a whole had stubbornly refused to heed God’s commandments and warnings. Today’s text tells of four more kings who “did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD.” Finally, God’s anger could not be pacified any longer, and the people of Judah bore the consequences of their rebellion. The focus verse says He sent their enemies against them to destroy them.

The choices we make today have consequences and will affect our future. If we make unwise choices in what we eat, ignore the need for exercise, or develop other harmful habits, our health will eventually suffer. If we make foolish use of credit cards and spend money on things we cannot afford, there will come a day of financial reckoning. If we neglect the call of God, or fail to live a disciplined spiritual life, that will affect us. Even so, we must never forget the vastness of God’s mercy and grace. He reaches out in love to those who heed His call, and He has an amazing ability to help and restore those who look to Him.

We can learn from the people of Judah not to resist God. Remembering that sin has consequences, we want to serve the Lord and by His help make right choices. He is waiting to give us His strength and grace to do so if we will just ask.

BACKGROUND

Under the reign of King Josiah, Judah experienced a brief period of turning away from idolatrous practices, as the king attempted to lead the nation back to worship of God. After Josiah’s death, people quickly returned to the wicked ways which they had followed during the reign of Manasseh. Josiah’s sons, Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim, were evil kings. The judgment which had been postponed during Josiah’s reign was about to descend upon Judah, only twenty-two years after Josiah’s death.

When King Josiah died, the people of Judah made his fourth son, Jehoahaz (also called Shallum), king (see 1 Chronicles 3:15). However, the armies of Pharaoh-nechoh of Egypt were moving northward, and they took control of Judah. Pharaoh removed Jehoahaz after he had reigned only three months, taking him to Egypt, where he died. Josiah’s older son, Jehoiakim (also called Eliakim) was made king, and the people of Judah were taxed to pay tribute to Egypt. Jehoiakim was an evil and oppressive king (see Jeremiah 22:13-19).

While Jehoiakim was king of Judah, the Neo-Babylonian Empire conquered the Assyrian Empire, and became the supreme governing force of the world. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon invaded the land of Judah three times, the first invasion beginning the seventy-year captivity prophesied by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 25:11-12).

During his first invasion in 605 B.C., King Nebuchadnezzar took treasures from the Temple and hostages from the nobility and royal families, including Daniel and the three Hebrew children. These were the vessels that Belshazzar used in his feast (see Daniel 5:2) and which Cyrus sent back to Jerusalem with Ezra (see Ezra 1:7-11).

The second invasion occurred in 597 B.C., during King Jehoiachin’s reign. At that time the rest of the Temple treasures and ten thousand men were taken away to Babylon. The Prophet Ezekiel was carried to Babylon during this captivity. In 588 B.C., during the reign of King Zedekiah of Judah, the third invasion took place. The city of Jerusalem was besieged for eighteen months and then destroyed in 586 B.C., along with the Temple. Zedekiah was carried to Babylon

with all the remnant of the Jewish population, except for the poorest of the people.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The reigns of the kings of Judah
 - E. Jehoahaz (23:31-35)
 - 1. The character of Jehoahaz's reign (23:31-32)
 - 2. The imprisonment of Jehoahaz by Necho (23:33)
 - 3. The replacement by Necho of Jehoahaz (23:34-35)
 - F. Jehoiakim (23:36-24:7)
 - 1. The character of Jehoiakim's reign (23:36-37)
 - 2. The oppression of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar (24:1-4)
 - 3. The death of Jehoiakim (24:5-7)
 - G. Jehoiachin (24:8-16)
 - 1. The character of Jehoiachin's reign (24:8-9)
 - 2. The captivity of Jehoiachin and the first deportation (24:10-16)
 - H. Zedekiah
 - 1. The character of Zedekiah's reign (24:17-19)
 - 2. The rebellion of Zedekiah
 - a. The rebellion against Babylon (24:20)

A CLOSER LOOK

- 1. What did Nebuchadnezzar take out of Judah?
- 2. Why do you think the people were more influenced by their evil kings than by Josiah's example of serving the Lord?

3. What are ways we can leave a legacy that may benefit our children and those who follow after us?

CONCLUSION

God is waiting to help us make right choices and avoid the consequences of sin. Are we availing ourselves of His help?

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“And Gedaliah swore to them, and to their men, and said unto them, Fear not to be the servants of the Chaldees: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon; and it shall be well with you.”
(2 Kings 25:24)**

There can be tremendous blessing in words of encouragement. In 1937, tragic news reached Oswald Smith, a young pastor and songwriter in Toronto, Canada. His brother-in-law, Clifford, a missionary in Peru, had been instantly killed in a car accident just as he and his family were preparing to return home on their first furlough. Oswald’s youngest sister, Ruth, thousands of miles from her homeland and only twenty-six years old, was left alone to raise their two little boys.

Longing to offer encouragement in his sister’s time of great need, Oswald penned the words of a poem:

*God understands your sorrow,
He sees the falling tear
And whispers, I am with thee;
Then falter not, nor fear.*

*God understands your heartache,
He knows the bitter pain,
O, trust Him in the darkness,
You cannot trust in vain.*

*God understands your longing
Your deepest grief He shares,
Then let Him bear your burden,
He understands, and cares.*

Oswald gave the poem to B.D. Ackley, who set it to music, and then sent the song to his sister. What a comfort it was to her! She cried as she sang the message from her brother, but its words ministered to her heart. And in the years since it was written, the hymn “God Understands” has brought encouragement to many who have faced grief and trials.

Today’s focus verse is another message of encouragement given in a time of great need—an assurance to the devastated remnant in Judah from Gedaliah, the governor Nebuchadnezzar had appointed. A friend of the Prophet Jeremiah, Gedaliah was telling the people of Judah, “You have no reason to fear further trouble. If you continue peaceably in the land, no harm will befall you.” The earthly kingdom of Judah had been demolished, but God was still willing to keep His spiritual Kingdom alive in the hearts of the exiles if

they would look His way for strength and comfort in time of need.

That is still true today. No matter what circumstances we find ourselves in, we can always be assured that God sees and cares about what is happening in our lives. As we accept difficult circumstances—things we cannot control—and keep trusting Him, He will watch over us and bring us strength, comfort, and encouragement in our hour of need.

BACKGROUND

This chapter records the final siege, famine, and ultimate fall of Jerusalem, the result of Judah’s rebellion against God in spite of His repeated offers of mercy.

In 597 B.C., in the second of three invasions, King Nebuchadnezzar had accepted the surrender of King Jehoiachin and his royal household, and spared the city of Jerusalem. At that time, the king and all notables of Jerusalem were deported to Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar appointed King Jehoiachin’s brother, Mattaniah, to be king over Jerusalem, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

Zedekiah had an evil eleven-year reign, culminating in a rebellion against Babylon that precipitated the final overthrow of Judah, which is described in this chapter. After a siege of many months, “the city was broken up.” Zedekiah and his men of war fled the city, but were pursued by the Babylonians and captured. The king’s sons were slain before his eyes, and he was blinded and then carried in chains to Babylon. The Temple was destroyed, the walls of the city were broken down, and all but a few of the people were carried away captive.

After Jerusalem’s fall, Nebuchadnezzar appointed Gedaliah to govern Judah. Gedaliah was from a notable family. His father had influenced Jehoiachin to save Jeremiah from death (see Jeremiah 26:24), and his grandfather Shaphan had been secretary to Josiah and had figured prominently in the king’s efforts to turn Judah back to God (2 Kings 22). Gedaliah himself returned a brokenhearted Jeremiah back to his home after the fall of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 39:14). He offered a message of encouragement to the remnant left in Judah, promising them support and protection if they would simply “dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon.” However, he was assassinated by Ishmael, one of Judah’s remaining captains who believed that the Jews should migrate to Egypt. The remaining Judeans fled to Egypt and took Jeremiah with them.

In Babylon, thirty-seven years after Jehoiachin's surrender, the new king of Babylon, Evil-merodach, graciously released Jehoiachin from prison and elevated him to a prominent position. He was given new garments and daily rations of food. Babylonian records have been found listing the rations of prisoners and foreigners residing in Babylon, and Jehoiachin was one who was specifically named, a historic validation of this Biblical account.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The reigns of the kings of Judah
 - H. Zedekiah
 - 2. The rebellion of Zedekiah
 - b. The siege of Jerusalem (25:1-7)
 - (1) The lengthy siege (25:1-3)
 - (2) The aborted escape (25:4-6)
 - (3) The murder of Zedekiah's sons and the blinding of Zedekiah (25:7)
 - c. The destruction of Jerusalem (25:8-12)
 - d. The deportation of the Temple's wealth (25:13-17)
 - e. The final deportation of Judah's inhabitants (25:18-21)
 - f. The appointment of Gedaliah as governor (25:22-26)
 - (1) Gedaliah's appointment (25:22-24)
 - (2) Gedaliah's murder (25:25)
 - (3) The remnant's flight to Egypt (25:26)
 - g. The release of Jehoiachin (25:27-30)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What were some of the things that the Chaldees took with them back to Babylon as spoils from the war?

2. Why do you think Gedaliah was assassinated?

3. As we conclude the Book of 2 Kings, what spiritual lessons have you learned from the study of this book?

CONCLUSION

God sees and cares about the circumstances of our lives, and He will see us through whatever challenges come our way.

NOTES



Overview for Nahum

Purpose: To pronounce judgment upon Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, and to comfort the people of Judah with the assurance that their enemy was doomed and would no longer be a threat to their national security.

Author: Nahum the Elkoshite, a prophet

Date Written: Probably between 663 and 654 B.C. according to evidence from within the book

To Whom Written: The people of Nineveh and Judah

History: In spite of repenting at the preaching of Jonah some 100 to 150 years earlier, the people of Nineveh (the mighty capital of the Assyrian Empire) had turned back to their evil ways, and had once again rejected God and were unrepentant. Under the leadership of Sennacherib, the armies of Assyria had invaded Judah and laid siege against Jerusalem, which was only delivered by an act of divine intervention. Then the prophet Nahum stepped on the scene to pronounce God's judgment and impending doom upon this wicked nation.

Setting: The fact that Nahum is identified as the "Elkoshite" in the first verse of the book suggests that he was from a place called Elkosh, though its location is unknown. Some Bible scholars identify it with Capernaum (literally, the "village of Nahum"). Thus, it is possible that Nahum was born in Galilee, but moved to Judah during Israel's defection. Other scholars propose a location in Mesopotamia, and suggest that Nahum may have been a descendant of Israelite captives. The fact that Nahum was so familiar with the city of Nineveh lends support to this view.

Assyria was the most powerful nation on earth, and was renowned for its plunder, slaughter, and vicious treatment of the people it conquered. Under Sennacherib, the city of Nineveh was reestablished

as the nation's capital. Surrounded by walls so thick that three chariots could travel abreast along the top, the city was considered impregnable. Inside the city walls were beautiful buildings, roads, and gardens.

Characteristics: The lyrical, poetic style of the book is deemed by scholars to be of the highest quality, an example of Hebrew literature at its best. Superb word pictures, and the author's rhetorical skill in his vivid portrayal of the attack, destruction, and plundering of the city has caused this short book to be called the most poetic of all the prophetic writings. It is also the most severe in tone of any of the minor prophets, with the only glimpses of brightness at the beginning of the prophecy (Nahum 1:7, 15) rather than at the end.

Summary: Chapter 1 announces the doom of Nineveh, and establishes the nature of the Judge who is the Divine Agent of its coming destruction. Verses 9-14 deliver a message from the Judge to Nineveh, mentioning specific instances of their futile rebellion against Jehovah. The closing verse of the chapter is a message of comfort for Judah.

In chapter 2, the author described Nineveh's fall in vivid detail, concluding with the prophet's wonderment at the destruction of such a powerful city, and the pronouncement of Jehovah against the evil and rebellious city.

Chapter 3 provides a vindication for Nineveh's destruction, giving three reasons for the judgment: 1) Nineveh's bloody history; 2) her similarity to wicked Egypt and particularly to the city of No (or Thebes); and 3) her apathy. The book closes with the pronouncement that no one could or would come to Nineveh's aid, and the nations who had suffered at Assyria's hands would rejoice over the report of her suffering.

Timeline

See “The Divided Kingdom” four-page timeline included in this unit.

Outline

*Hannah's Bible Outlines used by permission per WORDsearch.
A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.*

- I. Nineveh's fall announced (1:1-15)
 - A. The messenger of the Judge (1:1)
 - B. The majesty of the Judge (1:2-8)
 - C. The message of the Judge (1:9-14)
 - D. The message to Judah (1:15)
- II. Nineveh's fall described (2:1-13)
 - A. The declaration of warning (2:1-2)
 - B. The description of the invasion (2:3-5)
 - C. The doom of the city (2:6-10)
 - D. The destruction of the city (2:11-13)
- III. Nineveh's fall vindicated (3:1-19)
 - A. The defense of the city (3:1-3)
 - B. The condition of the city (3:4-7)
 - C. The certain doom of the city (3:8-19)



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.” (Nahum 1:3)

I grew up in the country, and although most of our animals were raised for food, Dad occasionally let us “adopt” one of them as a pet. For a while we had a goat that was a particular favorite with my brothers and me. Barney followed us everywhere. He loved potato chips, and would come running anytime he heard the rustling of a bag. Most of the time, we were happy to share.

Unfortunately, Barney also liked fruit trees. He had a destructive habit of standing on his hind legs, in a place where he could reach the branches, and eating the new shoots and leaves. When Dad figured out what was going on, he let us know that it was our responsibility to keep our goat out of the trees. That meant we had to pay close attention to the fences surrounding the orchard, making sure they were in good repair so Barney could not get to those delectable branches.

We knew Dad was serious about this instruction, and we knew what needed to be done. However, we did not take our responsibility seriously. We really did not give the fences the attention they needed to make them secure. Consequently, Barney found ways to keep getting back to those fruit trees.

When I look back, I realize that Dad really was very patient with us. However, after we repeatedly neglected his warnings and failed to fix the fences, Dad finally took action. He was definitely “slow to anger,” but the day came when we no longer had our pet! Being kids, we pouted, but deep down we knew we were responsible for losing our pet. Dad had given us plenty of chances, and we suffered the consequences for our inaction.

Our focus verse brings out that God was “slow to anger” in response to the sins of the people of Nineveh, but the consequences of their failure to heed the warnings of the prophets was sure to come. God is patient and merciful — He gave the wicked people of Nineveh plenty of opportunities to repent and turn from their evil ways. With the kind of detailed prophecy that Nahum gave them, they were certainly alerted to impending judgment. They could not blame anyone but themselves when the prophetic destruction did, in fact, occur. They had been warned!

This Scriptural warning is not, however, exclusively for Nineveh. There is a lesson here that all of us need to heed. The Lord is slow to anger; He gives many undeserved opportunities for repentance, but He also cannot tolerate sin, and ultimately will punish the unrepentant. Having heard the message of salvation, we must act upon it and do what God tells us to do.

As we read these chapters, let us ponder God’s wrath as He avenges sin and brings about justice. And let us determine to live within His rules, commands, and guidelines for life!

BACKGROUND

Nahum was the prophet of Nineveh’s doom. Under Jonah’s reluctant preaching approximately one hundred years earlier, the Ninevites had repented, and God had withheld His wrath. However, they returned to their evil ways, and by the time of the prophet Nahum, Nineveh was again a place of unparalleled wickedness. As the most powerful nation on earth, Assyria, with its capital city of Nineveh, was a perpetrator of terrible atrocities against the cities and peoples it conquered. At God’s direction, Nahum pronounced judgment on this sinful nation.

Chapter 1 opens with the prophet’s declaration regarding God, establishing that the Lord is good, but also faithful in the administration of justice. Beginning at verse 8, the prophet delivered God’s message concerning the coming annihilation of the Assyrian Empire and the capital city of Nineveh. The point is made that this would be a religious conflict, and that Jehovah would triumph over the vile gods of the heathen nation. In the final four verses of the chapter, the consolation is given that God would rescue Judah and her conquerors would be destroyed, never to rise.

In Chapter 2, Nahum foretold the specific events that would occur in 612 B.C., when the Babylonian and Median armies overran the supposedly impregnable Nineveh. How the city would be taken, the scattering of its inhabitants, and the plundering of its resources were spelled out by the prophet in amazing and graphic detail.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. Nineveh’s fall announced (1:1-15)
 - A. The messenger of the Judge (1:1)
 - B. The majesty of the Judge (1:2-8)
 - 1. A jealous God (1:2)
 - 2. A patient and mighty God (1:3-6)
 - 3. A preserving God (1:7)
 - 4. A wrathful God (1:8)

- D. The destruction of the city (2:11-13)

2. Why do you think the very positive statement in Nahum 1 verse 7 was included in this chapter, and to whom was it addressed?

- ## NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts; and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame. And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazingstock.” (Nahum 3:5-6)

The year was 1897, and celebratory events were taking place in Great Britain in honor of Queen Victoria’s sixty years on the British Throne. Author Rudyard Kipling had written a poem in honor of the occasion but, dissatisfied with his first attempts, had thrown an early draft in the wastepaper basket—from which it was rescued, so the story goes, by his wife. A friend who was visiting at the time joined Kipling’s wife in praising the poem, and with their encouragement, he completed it.

Titled *Recessional*, the piece expresses Kipling’s concern that the British Empire might go the way of all previous empires. He knew that when godly nations rise to wealth and power, they are inclined to forget their God, and to support that premise, he referred to the ancient cities of Nineveh and Tyre. Kipling recognized that boasting and aggressive foreign policy were vain in light of God’s dominion over the world.

The words “lest we forget” form the refrain of the piece. The phrase became popular after World War I as a warning about the perils of pride, self-confidence, or arrogance resulting in fatal retribution.

*Far-called, our navies melt away;
On dune and headland sinks the fire:
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet.
Lest we forget—lest we forget!*

Nahum would have appreciated Kipling’s challenge to the people of Great Britain. The prophet’s message of impending doom for the nation of Assyria was in direct response to that evil nation’s pride, cruelty, and idolatry—they had forgotten the message of Jonah, which had caused them to repent over a hundred years earlier. Now, because of their sins, Nahum predicted that this proud and powerful nation would be utterly destroyed, for when God’s judgment falls, men are powerless to stand against it.

In our day, as in the time of Nahum, we know that disobedience, rebellion, and injustice will not prevail, but will be punished by a righteous and holy God.

Let us learn the lessons that history has taught, and be careful to obey God and to put our trust in Him.

BACKGROUND

The chapter begins with a prediction of “woe” to the “bloody city.” The word *woe* implies an accusation and declaration of punishment. In this case, God was making a public declaration of punishment against the people of Nineveh due to their terrible deeds. The Assyrians were hungry to conquer nations and were guilty of extensive bloodshed, brutality, atrocity, and political tyranny.

Verse 5 leaves no question as to God’s intent toward the city: “Behold, I am against thee.” Through the prophet, He proclaimed that He would “discover thy skirts upon thy face, and . . . shew the nations thy nakedness.” Public exposure was a practice to reveal unchastity. In ancient times, prostitutes were made a spectacle by subjecting them to public ridicule. God used this graphic example to show that Nineveh would bear much disgrace. The same stripping of dignity that they had imposed on the nations they conquered would be imposed upon them.

Nineveh’s apparent indestructible status must have made Nahum’s prophecy seem incredulous. Its splendor, expansive territory (approximately eighteen thousand acres), fortified gates, and military dominance seemed permanent. Yet, God warned that Nineveh was no better than No [Thebes], which had been the capital city of Upper Egypt but had fallen to invading armies from Assyria.

The phrase “all thy strong holds” in verse 12 is an allusion to the outlying fortresses surrounding Nineveh. The Hebrew word translated *stronghold* means “fortification” or “defender.” Nahum foretold that these points of defense would be like fig trees that easily give up their ripe figs when shaken; they would be easily overcome.

The chapter takes on an ironic tone when, in verse 14, Nahum urged the Assyrians to attempt to prepare for this massive attack. He told them to store up water, reinforce their fortifications, make strong brick, and increase their numbers like the locusts. However, all this would be to no avail because in the moment of God’s vengeance, fire would devour the city, the leaders that they were so dependent upon would be like “great grasshoppers,” and the army commanders like “swarming locusts.” Locusts may travel in vast swarms and cause destruction in their path, but when their wings are exposed to cold, they grow stiff and lifeless. In essence, Nahum prophesied that their

generals would be inept and powerless to save the city and would fly away in that day of vengeance.

Nineveh's destruction occurred just as Nahum prophesied. Complete desolation and devastation took place and the nations around it rejoiced. Even today, archeological studies have found proof that Nineveh was indeed destroyed by fire. Thus, God's revenge for the oppressed was fulfilled.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- III. Nineveh's fall vindicated (3:1-19)
 - A. The defense of the city (3:1-3)
 - B. The condition of the city (3:4-7)
 - C. The certain doom of the city (3:8-19)
 - 1. The example of No (3:8-10)
 - a. Her formidable location (3:8)
 - b. Her formidable protection (3:9)
 - c. Her fatal demise (3:10)
 - 2. The defenselessness of Nineveh (3:11-13)
 - 3. The instructions for Nineveh (3:14)
 - 4. The destruction of Nineveh (3:15-19)
 - a. The complete desolation (3:15-16)
 - b. The strengthless army (3:17-18)
 - c. The complete destruction (3:19)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did Nahum prophesy that the nations would do when Nineveh fell?
-
-
-
-
-
-

2. Why do you think those who would hear the news of Assyria's destruction would clap their hands?

3. What are some strongholds that can help us to withstand the attacks of our spiritual enemy?

CONCLUSION

God is a God of justice. Unless there is repentance, sin and rebellion against Him will not go unpunished, regardless of seeming security and protection.

NOTES



Overview for Zephaniah

Purpose: To describe the Day of the Lord to Judah and the existent world powers, and to urge the people of Judah to turn back to God in light of the coming Babylonian invasion.

Author: Zephaniah the prophet, the great-great-grandson of the good king Hezekiah

To Whom Written: Judah and the surrounding nations

Date Written: Possibly about 640-621 B.C., right before King Josiah's great reform began in 621 B.C.

History: The world power of Assyria was beginning to weaken during this period in history, while that of Egypt was rising, though Egypt would be dislodged by the Babylonians in 605 B.C. Another significant backdrop to Zephaniah's message was the emergence of barbaric tribes in the north known as Scythians who were perceived as a threat to Judah.

On the religious front, the nation had rebelled against God and adopted idolatrous practices during the reign of King Manasseh, and when Zephaniah came on the scene, this influence was still predominant. In 621 B.C., a spiritual reformation took place in Judah under the leadership of King Josiah. Since Zephaniah does not mention this event, it is probable that his preaching happened prior to it and perhaps even prepared the way for that revival.

Setting: Because of the prophet's royal lineage, which would have given him access to the king's court, it is likely that he ministered in the city of Jerusalem. It is possible that he even lived in the palace complex.

Characteristics: The theme of the book is found in the oft-repeated phrase, "the day of the LORD," which occurs eighteen times in these three chapters, and thirteen times in the first chapter alone. Zephaniah describes the "day" with imagery of war and invasion. While earlier prophets saw the Day of the Lord as a specific point in time after which history continues to flow on, Zephaniah saw it as a terminal event. This is the first prophetic book to blend prophecy with apocalypse, or end-time events.

The prophecy of Zephaniah is characterized as a "word" rather than as a "burden," probably because it does not point to the destruction of a particular nation but instead is an authoritative message concerning the Day of the Lord, which will impact both Judah and her enemies.

Summary: In chapter one, the prophet launched immediately into the predictions of judgment in the light of the "day of the LORD." The first application is to Judah, and the prophet warned what Jehovah will do, why He will do it, and upon whom the judgments will fall. Chapter two opens with the announcement that one thing can keep the judgment from falling: repentance. The prophet proceeded to pronounce doom upon the surrounding nations of Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Ethiopia, and Assyria. In chapter 3, he shifted his focus to Jerusalem, enumerating the causes for judgment and issuing warnings. The chapter concludes with verses 8-13, which speak of the restoration of Israel and Judah, and an exhortation for the people to express their gratitude through singing, shouting, and rejoicing.

Timeline

See “The Divided Kingdom” four-page timeline included in this unit.

Outline

*Hannah's Bible Outlines used by permission per WORDsearch.
A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.*

- I. Introduction (1:1)
- II. The day of Jehovah's judgment (1:2 — 3:8)
 - A. Judgment upon all the earth (1:2-3)
 - B. Judgment upon Judah (1:4 — 2:3)
 - C. Judgment upon the surrounding nations (2:4-15)
 - D. Judgment upon Jerusalem (3:1-7)
 - E. Judgment upon all the earth (3:8)
- III. The day of Jehovah's restoration (3:9-20)
 - A. The restoration of the nations (3:9)
 - B. The restoration of Israel (3:10-20)



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD’s anger.” (Zephaniah 2:3)

When I think of seeking the Lord, the testimony of Jack Robbins comes to mind. Raised in a mining town where the men drank whisky and gambled, Jack was only four years old the first time he got drunk. Some in his hometown labeled him as “the boy who would come to a bad end.” By the age of seventeen, he could drink the strongest whisky, use the strongest tobacco, shuffle cards, shake dice, swear like a pirate, and fight, and his life was headed in a downward spiral. He testified, “I would get good jobs and lose them or give them up, and then go back to town to try to drown my troubles with whisky. I staggered the streets bleary-eyed, defeated, hopeless, and helpless. Nobody would hire me. My life was wasted and ruined.

“It was in an old shack on the mud flats in Portland, Oregon, where I finally met God. I was dying; a hopeless sight with my eyes sunken in my head—just a shadow of the man I used to be. I had walked that place night after night, as Satan taunted me with, ‘You’re lost, you’re lost!’ I would try to sleep it off, walk it off, drink it off; but ‘lost, lost!’ always rang in my soul.

“I thank God that, in the darkest hour of my life, I prayed. Lying there, alone and miserable, I had time to think about my childhood, and memories of my mother flooded my mind. She had taught me about Jesus when I was a little boy, telling me that if I ever got into trouble and needed a friend, Jesus could help me. Somehow, in my despair, those memories got hold of me.

“Full of sorrow, pain, and hopelessness, I sent up an SOS to God. I crawled out of my bunk, got down on that old, dirty floor, and asked God to help my miserable soul. I said: ‘Jesus, won’t You help me? I don’t want to go to Hell like this!’ I prayed not only once but I prayed night and day. I determined that if I never got God in my life, I was going to Hell praying.

“I praise God that one night after three weeks, Heaven opened and the power of God shot down into my dead soul. Up until that night, the devil had full run of that old shack. But when God came in, Hell and Satan went out. It seemed that the room was filled with light and peace. It was the most wonderful night I ever spent! That night God saved me and changed my life!”

God had mercy on Jack Robbins when he sought forgiveness with all of his heart. The words of our focus verse indicate that the people of Judah, too, could have sought and received mercy, for Zephaniah proclaimed that if they would seek righteousness and meekness, “. . . it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD’s anger.” While he foretold the coming destruction, he also offered a means of escape and protection, if only the people would turn from their sins and walk with God.

Today, too, mankind has received warning of a coming Day of Judgment. We thank God for the provision He has made for a way of escape. Let’s do our best to alert those around us to seek Him and thus take advantage of His provision!

BACKGROUND

Zephaniah the prophet, whose name means “hidden by Jehovah,” ministered from approximately 640 B.C. to 621 B.C., during the reign of Josiah, King of Judah (640-608 B.C.). Identified in the first verse of the book as the great-great-grandson of King Hezekiah, Zephaniah’s purpose was to warn the people of Judah of impending judgment, and to urge them to return to God. Although Zephaniah’s message dealt primarily with the theme of judgment, it is characterized as a “word” rather than a “burden,” probably because the message does not predict doom for a specific nation. He was one of the last prophets God sent to Judah before the nation was carried into captivity by Babylon.

In chapter 1, the prophet launched immediately into predictions of judgment. He warned what Jehovah would do, why He would do it, and upon whom the judgments would fall. He proclaimed that judgment would fall because the people did not honor God’s name (verses 4-5), did not seek God’s face (verse 6), did not obey God’s word (verse 9), and did not acknowledge God’s rule (verse 12).

Zephaniah’s proclamation about this tragic situation was clearly a message of warning. He told his fellow citizens of the coming “day of the LORD” and described three things about that great Day. He announced that it would be a day when:

God searches (verse 12) – Nothing is hidden from Him and the spiritually indifferent would be found.

God judges (verses 13-18) – The judgment was near (1:14) and inescapable.

God pardons (chapter 2, verse 3) – For some that day will hold no terrors; God Himself will hide those who have sought Him in repentance.

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- 3.** What will be some of the evidences in our lives if we are truly seeking the Lord, as instructed in our focus verse?

CONCLUSION

NOTES

- [illegible]

-
-
-
-
-
-



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! every one that passeth by her shall hiss, and wag his hand.” (Zephaniah 2:15)

If you were to drive in the area about fifty miles south of Lake Tahoe in California, near the Nevada border, you would come across a town that has, indeed, become a “desolation” and “a place for beasts to lie down in.”

Bodie, California, became a boom town in 1877, and by 1879, it had a population of around ten thousand and boasted about two thousand buildings. Sadly, the town was renowned for its wickedness. Murders were a commonplace occurrence. Robberies, stage holdups, and street fights were daily events, and the town’s sixty-five saloons contributed to the problem. Seven breweries were kept busy day and night to supply liquor to the saloons, and whisky was brought in by horse carriages, one hundred barrels at a time. The Reverend F. M. Warrington, who visited the town in 1881, described it as “a sea of sin, lashed by the tempest of lust and passion.” One little girl, whose family planned a visit to the infamous town, wrote in her diary: “Good-bye God, I’m going to Bodie.” That phrase became famous throughout the West.¹

However, the boom was over in just a few short years, and by 1882, the town of Bodie was declining. The mines in the area were going bad, and companies went bankrupt. Two fires blazed through the business district, ravaging the area. Bodie eventually faded into a ghost town.

In today’s focus verse, the prophet Zephaniah foretold the destruction of the great city of Nineveh. Nineveh was far bigger than a western boom town—it more accurately could be compared to Washington D.C., Baghdad, or Tokyo. In spite of its notoriety and seeming invincibility, this wicked city was destroyed so completely that its existence was even questioned until proven by archeological finds.

What lesson can we derive from Zephaniah’s prophecy and its fulfillment some ten years later? Simply this: judgment will come upon the wicked. God does not take sin lightly, and it will be punished. However, we can determine in our hearts to be part of the faithful remnant who humbly worship and obey the living God, and thus escape divine wrath and retribution!

BACKGROUND

In this passage, God’s ire was directed at the countries that surrounded Judah, which also were her enemies. The countries cited in the passage were Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Ethiopia, and Assyria. God’s expectation of holiness and righteousness extends to all nations. By sending His warning of impending punishment, God was reminding the people that He alone is God of all, and they would be subject to His judgment if they refused to accept His mercy.

The Philistines were Judah’s neighbor to the west along the Mediterranean Sea. These people were sworn enemies of Judah, and had fought with her constantly. The best known of such conflicts was the battle between David and Goliath. The Philistines frequently attempted to seize Judah’s land, and practically barred her access to the sea. In verse 4, God pronounced judgment on the Philistines’ four major coastal cities: Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Ekron. These four cities, along with Gath (Goliath’s home city), formed the confederation of the Philistines and were the pride of her existence. In addition to proclaiming their destruction, God said He would cause Judah to possess the Philistine’s land, including the strategic sea coasts.

The judgment pronounced on Ammon and Moab came in tandem, probably because their transgressions were similar. Moab and Ammon bordered Judah on the east side across the Dead Sea. Moab was directly on the opposite side of the sea to Judah, while Ammon was to the northeast. Like Philistia, the two nations were always at odds with Judah. They reproached and taunted the Kingdom of Judah and her God. Zephaniah foretold that God would destroy the two nations for their sins, and make them wastelands like Sodom and Gomorrah. The prophet gave a poignant picture of what they would become: desolate like the Dead Sea. God would also give their land to the people of Judah to possess.

The judgment upon Ethiopia was brief and not specific regarding its sin. God had a record, though, and would make the people suffer by the sword. The Ethiopia mentioned here is not present-day Ethiopia, but the Cushite dynasties that ruled Egypt at the time. They were referred to as “Ethiopians.” In effect, this judgment was directed at Egypt, Judah’s distant southern neighbor.

The last of the nations to receive judgment was Assyria, Judah’s neighbor to the far north. Located in present-day Iraq with Nineveh as its capital city,

Assyria, along with Egypt, was a superpower of that era. The city was acclaimed as one of the wonders of the world of that period. It controlled immense wealth as the trade hub between the East and West, because the Tigris River served as the vital link between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. God’s judgment was that Nineveh would become a desolate place and a wilderness. Instead of a bustling and prosperous city filled with people and activity, animals would inhabit it. This would be a terrible desolation.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The Day of Jehovah’s judgment
 - C. Judgment upon the surrounding nations (2:4-15)
 - 1. Upon Philistia (2:4-7)
 - 2. Upon Moab and Ammon (2:8-11)
 - 3. Upon Ethiopia (2:12)
 - 4. Upon Assyria (2:13-15)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What was the judgment pronounced on the land of the Philistines?

2. Why do you think God listed specific judgments against the nations surrounding Judah, instead of just condemning them all as a group?

3. What type of “idolatry” do we need to guard against in our day? How do we do so?

CONCLUSION

There are consequences for wickedness! God’s punishment is sure to come to pass if His warnings are ignored.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.” (Zephaniah 3:17)

Often I am privileged to visit various care and retirement centers throughout the metropolitan area with a team from our church. We sing Gospel hymns, read Scripture verses, share our testimonies, and pray with the residents. Many times we are asked to do favorites such as “In the Garden,” “Precious Memories,” and “What a Friend We Have in Jesus.” As we sing the songs requested, smiles break out, tears start to fall, and many of the residents join in on the words of the old hymns right along with us.

Our hearts, too, are blessed with joy as we share God’s love with these elderly folk. As we sing, we look out over the aging faces and wonder if they know the Lord. I really believe we are spreading joy to them by singing God’s praises, for the residents and care providers often tell us how much our singing means to them. Sometimes when we are about ready to leave, they ask us to sing again one of the songs we just sang a few minutes earlier. We always oblige, for we understand that singing is a form of communication that touches the heart and soul, bringing love and joy to the singer as well as the listener.

Imagine what it will be like to have the Lord joy over us with singing! Jesus will return and sing with joy over His people as He gathers us from around the world. We will not be afraid. Our troubles will be over for Jesus will live and reign among us. What a glorious time this will be! May we all one day be a part of God’s grand choir, and as we sing God’s praises now, let us anticipate that day!

BACKGROUND

In our focus verse, the prophet Zephaniah was offering hope to Judah. His reason for writing was to warn the people to turn away from their idol worship and disobedience to God, and to urge them to return to the God of their forefathers. Josiah, the king of Judah at this time, was trying to change the evil trends established by the two previous kings. Zephaniah’s prophecy may have helped Josiah’s reform.

After predicting the destruction of surrounding nations in chapter 2, Zephaniah began chapter 3 by telling of Jerusalem’s great sins. The people were accused of not listening to God or trusting Him and

participating in evil deeds, even though they professed devotion to God. Even the rulers of the city were full of evil doings. The supposed prophets did not proclaim God’s word; instead they only preached what the people wanted to hear.

The message of doom in the beginning of the chapter became a message of hope in verse 9, as the prophet declared God’s salvation and deliverance for those who will be faithful to Him. Instead of calling on false gods, he foretold that the people will call upon the living God. When that day comes—an event still in the future—they will have “a pure language” (they will no longer use oaths or offer prayers to idols). Their sins will be forgiven, and their hearts cleansed. The Gentiles will serve the Lord with the scattered Israelites who will return to their land. Finally the Jews will recognize their Messiah and be at peace. Christ will rule over their nation and all will worship Him.

All the people will sing and shout because God has taken away their punishment, defeated their enemies, and come to dwell with them. They will sing because He will guarantee that they will never be afraid again. God will sing over His people also with great joy. His people, the Jews, will be restored to their homeland, and their land will be fruitful as they are given a new start. They will forget their past disobediences and praise the Lord.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The Day of Jehovah’s judgment
 - D. Judgment upon Jerusalem (3:1-7)
 - 1. The causes (3:1-4)
 - 2. The warnings (3:5-7)
 - E. Judgment upon all the earth (3:8)
- III. The day of Jehovah’s restoration (3:9-20)
 - A. The restoration of the nations (3:9)
 - B. The restoration of Israel (3:10-20)
 - 1. The regathering (3:10)
 - 2. The redemption and rest (3:11-13)
 - 3. The rejoicing (3:14)
 - 4. The ruler (3:15-17)
 - 5. The reward (3:18-20)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What caused judgment to fall on Jerusalem?

[illegible][illegible]

Just as the Lord will one day restore the Jewish nation that brought shame and disgrace to His name, so He will forgive us if we have strayed away from Him. When we come to Jesus with a repentant heart, He will love us, forgive us, and sing over us with joy!

[illegible]



Overview for Jeremiah

Purpose: Jeremiah's discourse to the people of Judah was a plea for them to repent of their sins and return to serving God. His messages were Judah's final warnings before destruction came at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah also reiterated God's mercy and the fact that the people of Judah would eventually return to their land after their Babylonian captivity.

Author: Jeremiah

Time Period Covered: About 627 to 586 B.C.

History: Jeremiah, whose name meant "Yahweh [God] establishes," was born around 650 B.C. in Anathoth (a city about three miles north of Jerusalem) during the reign of Manasseh. Jeremiah prophesied during the reigns of Judah's last five kings, and during a portion of Judah's Babylonian captivity. His ministry lasted over forty years, until after Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians in 586 B.C. When Judah was defeated by Babylon, most of Jeremiah's countrymen were taken captive, but he continued to live in the ruins of Jerusalem. Tradition states that Jeremiah was taken to Egypt against his will and eventually executed in 570 B.C.

Key People: Jeremiah, Baruch, Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah, Ebed-Melech, Nebuchadnezzar

Setting: Jeremiah's family was of the priestly lineage of Aaron and his hometown was close to Jerusalem. His prophetic ministry took place in Judah, beginning around 627 B.C., during Josiah's thirteenth year as king. Josiah had instituted several reforms in his attempt to turn Judah back to God, but his reign was cut short when he was killed on the battlefield in 608 B.C. Josiah was Judah's last godly king; the four following

kings were idolaters who disregarded Jeremiah's messages of judgment. During the following twenty-three years, Judah's kings led the nation into a sharp decline, resulting in their destruction at the hand of the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

Jeremiah spoke God's message among a host of false prophets who typically said the opposite of what he prophesied. Jeremiah asserted that he was the true prophet of God, and even though at times he wanted to cease from prophesying, he said that God's Word "was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay" (Jeremiah 20:9). The people of Judah also rejected Jeremiah's messages, and he suffered imprisonment and public humiliation during much of his ministry.

Summary: The Book of Jeremiah, a compilation of prophecies, history, and biographical information, is the second longest prophetic book in the Old Testament and is not arranged in standardized chronological order. The first chapter is a prologue that identifies the prophet and describes his call. Chapters 2 through 33 are a series of pronouncements of judgment against Judah by the prophet. Chapters 34 through 45 concern Jeremiah's ministry and the siege of Jerusalem. The remainder of the book contains Jeremiah's messages to the nations, concluding with the fall of Jerusalem.

The Book of Jeremiah is the only prophetic book in the Old Testament that gives so many personal details about the life and service of the writer. In addition to his account of God's calling him to be a prophet at a young age, Jeremiah described his persecution at the hand of the people of Judah, and his grief at their rejection of his message, earning him the title of the "weeping prophet." Baruch was Jeremiah's scribe, and he faithfully wrote what Jeremiah dictated to him.

Timeline

See “The Divided Kingdom” four-page timeline included in this unit.

Outline

*Hannah's Bible Outlines used by permission per WORDsearch.
A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.*

- I. Prologue (1:1-19)
 - A. The identification of the prophet (1:1-3)
 - B. The enlistment of the prophet (1:4-10)
 - C. The instruction of the prophet (1:11-19)
- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah (2:1 — 45:5)
 - A. The condemnation of the prophet (2:1 — 25:38)
 - B. The conflicts of the prophet (26:1 — 29:32)



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.” (Jeremiah 1:5)

Julie and Alex Armas desperately wanted a baby. Twenty-seven-year-old Julie had already suffered two miscarriages, and now she was pregnant again. Hopeful and excited, she and her husband had already picked out a name. After fourteen weeks, however, complications developed. An ultrasound scan was done and tests were taken. The finding was what every parent dreads hearing; something was wrong. The little unborn baby had spina bifida.

Abortions are routinely offered by doctors when abnormalities are detected in a fetus, and at this stage of pregnancy, it could easily have been done. For Julie and Alex, however, this was not an option. They believed that God already knew this child, and he was a living soul, but they were racked by pain at the grim picture the doctor painted of the future for their long-desired child.

In the ensuing weeks, Julie, an obstetrics nurse, decided to research treatments and found a pioneering program of in utero surgery for spina bifida. (Medical science did not yet have the capability to keep a twenty-one-week-old unborn baby alive outside the womb.)

After the procedure began, with the surgeon working ever so carefully, a little hand reached out of the incision and grabbed hold of the surgeon’s finger like it was holding on for dear life. This little baby boy, who already had been named Samuel, had not yet felt the touch of his mother’s skin against his own. Yet the picture captured at that moment has impacted people around the world and has been referred to as “The Hand of Hope.” Samuel is now an adult and his life has been a great inspiration to others.

We may find it amazing that medical science and modern photography allow us to see a baby before it is born. Yet God saw Samuel Armas before he was born, and He has seen every other baby down through the ages. As the focus verse notes, God saw Jeremiah in his mother’s womb. He thought of who Jeremiah would become. God had a plan for Jeremiah, and He also has a plan for each one of us. His design can be thwarted by our choices, but if we follow His will, we can find and fulfill His perfect plan for us.

BACKGROUND

Old Testament books were originally written on scrolls in the Hebrew language. Often the scrolls had a preface that identified a book’s contents. Jeremiah 1:1-3 is this preface. It indicated that Jeremiah was the author. He was from Anathoth, a city of priests (Joshua 21:18) that was about three miles northeast of Jerusalem. At God’s direction, Jeremiah spoke “the word of the LORD” during the administrations of the Southern Kingdom’s last five kings and on to the time of Judah’s captivity.

Beginning with verse 4, Jeremiah described his personal call by God. This was a conversation between the Almighty Creator and a human being. God was clear; He told Jeremiah, “I formed thee,” “I knew thee,” “I sanctified thee,” and, “I ordained thee a prophet.” God declared to Jeremiah that He had set him apart for service before he was born.

Jeremiah’s sensitive and retiring nature showed in his hesitation to take up this awesome responsibility. He said, “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.” The word *child* could be translated “young man,” and Jeremiah was perhaps between seventeen and his early twenties when God called him. While Jeremiah was hesitant and felt inadequate, he did not refuse or rebel.

God officially inaugurated the young prophet when He put forth His hand and touched Jeremiah’s mouth, pledging to inspire his words. Jeremiah was to proclaim to “the nations” (not just Judah) that their wickedness and idolatry would be judged. Yet, a note of hope was included, for Jeremiah was also commissioned “to build, and to plant.”

Jeremiah received two symbolic visions from God. Verses 11-12 deal with the rod of an almond tree. In Palestine, the almond is the first tree to blossom, or awaken, in the spring. God wanted Jeremiah to know that He was fully awake to Judah’s sins, and His Word and judgment would assuredly come to pass. Verses 13-16 deal with the seething pot. The original Hebrew word that is translated “pot” meant a large kettle used to cook for a crowd. Just as such a pot can boil over and spill, so judgment would come from the north and go over Judah. In time, the armies of Babylon fulfilled this prophecy.

Jeremiah knew that the message from God would not be warmly received by the people of Judah, and God told him, “Gird up thy loins.” This was an expression of the times which meant to prepare for service. Long robes were tucked under a belt so a

person could fight, work, or run freely. God promised that those who opposed Jeremiah would not prevail against him, “for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee.”

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. Prologue (1:1-19)
 - A. The identification of the prophet (1:1-3)
 - 1. The background of the prophet (1:1)
 - 2. The time of the prophet (1:2-3)
 - B. The enlistment of the prophet (1:4-10)
 - 1. The divine selection of the prophet (1:4-5)
 - 2. The divine commission of the prophet (1:6-10)
 - C. The instruction of the prophet (1:11-19)
 - 1. By visions (1:11-16)
 - a. The almond tree (1:11-12)
 - b. The boiling pot (1:13-16)
 - 2. By pronouncement (1:17-19)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. From where did the Lord say that evil would break forth?

2. Jeremiah was hesitant to answer God's call. Why did this call look so overwhelming?

3. What should we do if God calls us to do something that looks extremely difficult or impossible?

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

God cares about every person, even before he or she is born, and He has a special plan for each one. Are you following God's plan for your life?

NOTES

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on its right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?” (Jeremiah 2:5)

When people choose to go away from the Lord and walk after “vanity,” it is tragic. Stan Frank told his story this way. “At one time my wife and I were saved, and bringing up our children to love the Lord. We had five children between the ages of two and eight years when we began to look other places for our pleasure. We neglected to read the Bible and to pray, and stopped going to church. Sin came into our lives, and my heart was full of rebellion.

“My wife and I thought we could find something in this world to satisfy our hearts. We searched in many avenues, but we were miserable. One time my wife was so angry that she said she would pack her clothes and leave. I didn’t give her any consolation; I told her I would help her pack!

“Thank God for His mercy that followed us for twenty years! One day I had a heart attack while playing golf with my younger son. God was calling me. My wife and I began going to church. I knew that I needed God, but I was so proud! One Sunday, two men I had known most of my life encouraged us to pray. Finally, we both knelt and repented of our sins. A miracle took place! God forgave our sins and put His love back into our hearts. He also gave us love for one another. I put my arm around my wife and kissed her, which was really something for me! I had neglected her for a long time.”

God does love backsliders, and He uses every possible method to bring them back to Him. He was trying to draw the Jewish people back through the Prophet Jeremiah. In our text, Jeremiah reminded the people of how the true God that they had rejected and no longer inquired about had brought them out of the land of Egypt. He had taken them through the wilderness and the perils of an unknown land until they reached the plentiful country that He had promised to them. The land was bountiful and they were well-fed, yet they chose to defile their great heritage and reject the One who had given it to them. They turned to idol worship. Even the priests and those who handled the Law no longer knew the true God, but were prophesying according to Baal.

In spite of this, God still loved the Jewish people and remembered the times when they had sought after

Him in the wilderness and during their early days in the Promised Land. In the same way, God continues to love backsliders today and call after their hearts. Jeremiah faithfully reminded the people of Judah that punishment would come to them because of their refusal to repent. Similarly, ultimate judgment will come to backsliders who continue to reject God’s mercy.

Reminding ourselves of the things God has done for us, thanking Him, and continuing to seek His direction in our lives will guard our hearts against backsliding and forgetting the benefits of keeping our trust in God and His Word.

BACKGROUND

Today’s text is the first of twelve addresses given by Jeremiah to the Jewish people. However, these are not necessarily in chronological order.

God earnestly tried to reason with the people of Judah. He told Jeremiah to speak in Jerusalem, which was the center of their idolatry. God reminded the people of His blessings and miracles, and how they had rejected Him and turned to the idols that their neighbors worshipped. Jeremiah compared this to a marriage where the initial devotion of the bride (the Jewish people) was replaced by unfaithfulness.

In verse 8 we read that those who were commissioned to direct the people to God had turned to idolatry. The priests were responsible for expounding the religious Law to the people, and the pastors were in charge of the administration of the civil laws. The prophets chose to prophesy the supposed oracles of Baal.

In verses 9-11, God told the people to look at the nations about them, who had not abandoned loyalty to their gods. Yet the people of Judah had departed from the living and true God, and turned to gods who could not communicate with them or help them.

Cisterns, referenced in verse 13, were tanks used to collect rain water, and were common in the East where wells were in short supply. The water from the cisterns was far inferior to a fresh supply, and if the stonework was cracked or broken, the water would leak out. God said that His people had forsaken Him, the fountain of living waters, and turned to false gods, who were comparable to a broken cistern that could hold no water.

In verses 14-18, God reminded Judah of the consequences of rejecting Him. Noph and Tahapanes were cities in Egypt that were supposed to be allies. However, they had “broken the crown of thy head.”

Some commentators believe this referred to the slaying of King Josiah by the king of Egypt (see 2 Kings 23:29-30).

In verses 19-26, Jeremiah said although God had given them a good start as a “noble vine,” they had turned into a “degenerate plant.” No matter how much soap they used to make themselves clean, they remained a polluted people. God compared their lust for Baalim (the plural for multiple gods) to the lust of a dromedary (a young female camel) when she is wandering to and fro looking for a male.

In verses 27-28, God said that when trouble came, the people would turn to Him for help, but He would not listen. Besides their national deities, Judah had a god for each city. God told the people to ask these gods for help and see if they could save in Judah’s time of trouble.

In verses 29-37, God reminded Judah that He had tried to chastise them, but they had refused to listen and had killed His prophets when they tried to proclaim the truth. God had been faithful to them in supplying their needs when they put their trust in Him, but they declared that they were their own masters, and they did not need His help. God said they were less attached to Him than a maid was to her ornaments, or a bride to her dress.

God also accused Judah of shedding innocent blood, which may have referred to the children who had been sacrificed to Molech, or to the profusion of blood that Manasseh had shed in Jerusalem during his reign (2 Kings 21:16). In spite of Judah’s declaration of innocence and determination to seek help from foreign alliances, God would see that the nation did not prosper.

At the beginning of chapter 3, Jeremiah again used the analogy of a marriage to illustrate Judah’s attitude. The people were not ashamed of their sinfulness, which had polluted the land.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - A. The condemnation of the prophet
 - 1. The first sermon: Judah’s unfaithfulness (2:1 — 3:5)
 - a. Israel’s previous devotion (2:1-3)
 - b. Israel’s coming judgment (2:4-13)
 - c. Israel’s humiliation (2:14-19)
 - d. Israel’s rejection (2:20-37)
 - (1) The character of Israel’s sin (2:20-28)
 - (2) The result of Israel’s sin (2:29-37)
 - e. Israel’s admonition (3:1-5)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What two evils did the prophet say the people had committed?

2. Why do you think God continued to remind Israel about how He led them out of Egypt and through the wilderness to a plenteous land, even though this had happened hundreds of years before Jeremiah’s time?

3. What steps can you take to ensure that you remain thankful for salvation and God’s provision in your life, and stay focused on Him rather than the “gods” of this world?

CONCLUSION

We want to cherish God’s commandments and blessings and never turn away from them.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God.” (Jeremiah 3:22)

Don Danner was a man who spoke passionately of the wonderful power of God to restore the backslider. He would often begin his testimony in our church services by saying, “It was a happy day when Jesus washed my sins away!” His face would shine as he would tell how grateful he was that God had reached out to him in his backslidden state.

“I had experienced this old-time salvation when I was a boy,” he would relate, “but the insidious ways of Satan and the bright lights of the world had taken their toll. I wasn’t down deep in sin, not in any tragic circumstance by any means. I had everything the world could lay at my feet to make me happy—but I was not happy. From the outside, it looked as if I were having a good time. My friends and associates thought I was a good person, but they didn’t know the struggle that was going on in my heart: Satan battling for my soul and Jesus wooing me, ‘Oh, backslider, why don’t you come Home?’”

“That October day was lovely—it was a scenic day, bright and sunny. The flowers in front of the tabernacle were beautiful, the birds were out: all the things I ordinarily would like to be focusing my camera on. But I wasn’t noticing the beauties of nature that day. God’s focus was on my soul. I realized I must stop and listen to the Voice of Jesus.

“Thank God, He heard my prayer from out in that wilderness of sin. He lifted me out of all the misery and set my feet on the Rock Christ Jesus. It took only a few minutes down at the altar of prayer. When I cried out to Him, the answer came and God’s salvation was restored in my heart. I knew it! My name was written down in Glory. I cannot enumerate all the blessings the Lord has given me over the years. This is a wonderful way to live! How I thank God for victory over sin.”

Don Danner had more than two decades to experience that joy of restoration before God called him home to Heaven. He was living proof of the power behind God’s promise to Israel in our focus verse, “Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.” God’s people, like Don Danner, had turned away from their spiritual heritage. Yet, in spite of their rebellion against Him, God graciously encouraged them to return to Him in true repentance, and

promised healing for the pain and shame that their backsliding had brought them.

Still today, God’s mercy reaches out to those who have turned away from their commitment to Him and gone back into sin. There is hope for the backslider! Let us be alert to opportunities to offer that hope to those who have turned away from God. And let us cherish the mercy God has extended to us and value the privilege that we have to be His children!

BACKGROUND

This passage begins Jeremiah’s second sermon, and is a continuation of the condemnation found in the first. God’s message to the people of Judah was that in spite of their idolatry and blatant rejection of Him, His mercy would continue to be extended if they would sincerely repent and turn from their evil ways.

In verses 6-11, God reminded Judah of the judgment that had befallen the Northern Kingdom of Israel because of its idolatry. Except for a brief period, the Northern Kingdom had continually engaged in the idolatry that was originally endorsed by its first king, Jeroboam. God’s pleas for Israel to turn back to Him had gone unheeded, and around one hundred years before this passage was written, the Northern Kingdom was conquered and taken captive by the Assyrians. God told the people of Judah that what had happened to Israel should have deterred them from following the same path. Instead, they were actually more at fault than the people of Israel because they claimed to serve God, but their hearts were far from Him.

In verses 12-13, God addressed the few remaining Jews in the occupied Northern Kingdom. He told the people that if they would honestly acknowledge their sin and repent, He would show them mercy and would spare them from additional judgment. In verses 14-18, God pointed to a future time when a remnant of both Israel and Judah (“one of a city, and two of a family”) will return from exile to Zion, and He will give them leaders after His own heart. The Ark of the Covenant will no longer be needed for worship because the Lord Himself will reign in Jerusalem, and all the nations of the earth will come to Jerusalem to worship Him. In verse 19, God questioned how this could be accomplished when their hearts were so far from following Him, but He reconciled it by saying the time will come (in the millennial kingdom) when they will call Him their Father, and they will no longer turn away from Him.

In verses 20-25, Jeremiah exhorted the people of Israel and Judah to realize that their only hope was in

God and the salvation He would provide if they would repent and turn from their sin. Chapter 3 ends with Jeremiah’s prayer of confession.

Verses 1-4 of chapter 4 conclude the message. Once again, God calls His people to return to Him in repentance. The Hebrew word translated *return* has a meaning of “return from exile,” but also has the deeper meaning of repentance from sin and turning back to God.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - A. The condemnation of the prophet
 - 2. The second sermon: Repentance or retribution
 - a. The comparison of Israel and Judah (3:6-11)
 - b. The consolation of restoration (3:12—4:4)
 - (1) Repentance brings blessing (3:12-16)
 - (2) Repentance brings place of honor (3:17-20)
 - (3) Repentance brings healing (3:21-25)
 - (4) Repentance brings good works (4:1-4)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What adjective did God repeatedly use to describe Judah in the first six verses of our text?

2. Why do you think God had Jeremiah cite the example of the fall of Israel, the Northern Kingdom, to the people of Judah?

3. Based on this text, what hope and encouragement can we offer a backslider?

CONCLUSION

God offers healing and restoration to those who have turned away from Him. How grateful we should be for the wonderful mercy of God!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us! for we are spoiled.” (Jeremiah 4:13)

Whirlwinds are common and destructive in many parts of the world, but here in Portland, Oregon, where I live, they are less common. However, we do occasionally have severe windstorms. My mind goes back to the biggest storm I remember: the Columbus Day Storm of 1962. It ranked among the most intense to strike the United States for many decades.

Since I was young when the storm occurred, I paid little attention to any record-making statistics being reported in the news media that day. But I did pay a lot of attention to the wind! The “big blow” is etched into my memory. Our family lived adjacent to our church campground, and I recall watching the towering fir trees just feet from our house bend over at almost right angles. Broken branches and debris flew through the air; when the storm was finally over, the rubble was nearly waist-deep on many parts of the campground. Fifty-five big trees had snapped off and crashed to the earth, in many cases smashing the small cabins used for accommodating visitors at our camp meeting.

As devastating as the results of that October blast were, they pale by comparison with the destruction predicted by Jeremiah in today’s text. The prophet foretold a coming invasion by using the image of a “dry wind”—referring to the sirocco, a hot east wind that sometimes roared across the area. Since the violence of these storms caused great distress to the people and also obliterated their crops, the people of Jeremiah’s day would have easily understood what a terrible devastation was being symbolized. Their cry, after the invading armies swept through as a whirlwind, would be, “Woe unto us! for we are spoiled.” Their only deliverance from impending doom would be to wash their hearts from wickedness (verse 14).

While the prophet’s warning indicated that judgment was certain, God still promised that the faithful remnant would be spared (see verse 27). Today, too, judgment for those who persist in unrighteousness is sure, but a way of escape is still open for those who repent and give their lives to God. We can escape the devastation that God has said will come upon this world. Thank God for His mercy and His plan for deliverance of those who honor and trust Him!

BACKGROUND

In this passage, part of Jeremiah’s second sermon, the prophet turned his attention to the impending judgment that would come if Judah did not repent. Blowing a trumpet was the customary way of warning the people that danger was approaching. To “set up the standard” meant to map out a way of escape and point to a place of refuge. Although Jeremiah did not directly name the enemy “from the north,” history indicates that he was referring to Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army, which conquered Judah in 586 B.C. Some Bible scholars differ in their interpretation of verse 10. One thought is that God had allowed the false prophets to deceive the people into believing there would be peace. Others see it as a cry of despair from Jeremiah as he tried to reconcile the grand promises of God concerning Israel and their Promised Land with the terrible plight that now awaited them.

In verses 11-13, the prophet used a metaphor of the dreaded dry wind, or sirocco, which commonly blew over Palestine in the spring and fall, and could last from three to seven days. The devastating impact upon crops, livelihood, and lives was a picture of the great destruction that would come at the hand of the foe from the north.

Moved by what he had foreseen, in verses 14-18 Jeremiah once again beseeched the people of Judah to repent, pointing out that they alone were responsible for their rebellion which would bring definite judgment and destruction. In verses 19-22, Jeremiah expressed his deep anguish at the vision he had seen and Judah’s refusal to repent. In verses 23-26, the prophet foretold that the fruitful land that had been promised to Israel would become the opposite—a wilderness. In Jeremiah’s vision, everywhere he looked was total desolation. The earth was empty and had no light; the mountains shook; all living things were gone; all the cities were broken down. Yet, even in the midst of this devastation, Jeremiah offered a ray of hope in verse 27, “. . . yet will I not make a full end.” God’s mercy would be available when true repentance occurred.

In the concluding verses, Jeremiah reiterated that judgment was sure and God would not turn back from it. Verse 30 relates to Jerusalem, which had acted as an immoral harlot who had decked herself with crimson, ornaments of gold, and enlarged her eyes with paint. All of this vanity would not deter her enemies from seeking her destruction. In the end, she would be as a woman experiencing unbearable labor pains, and deserted by all.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - A. The condemnation of the prophet
 - 2. The second sermon: Repentance or retribution
 - c. The chaos from the north (4:5-31)
 - (1) The judgment upon the land (4:6-13)
 - (2) The invasion of the land (4:14-18)
 - (3) The desolation of the land (4:19-31)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did the prophet say would happen to the hearts of the king, princes, and priests?

2. What types of judgment will follow those today who refuse to heed God's warnings to return to Him?

3. In what ways have you experienced God's mercy and preservation in your own life?

CONCLUSION

While destruction of the wicked is certain, a way of escape is still open. If we pay careful heed to the warnings given in God's Word, we will escape that time of terrible devastation.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not.” (Jeremiah 5:21)

As the photocopier demonstration became more and more technical, I could feel my eyes glazing over. “Oh, I see,” I said as one particular function was explained. That was followed by, “Mmm-hmm. That’s a nice feature . . .” While my ears were hearing precisely how our new piece of office equipment worked, my mind, of its own volition, wandered off to upcoming schedules, the details of dinner, and whether I could get to the laundry before bedtime. When a pause occurred and the demonstrator asked those assembled around the machine if we had questions, I re-focused and discovered that for several minutes I had been hearing, but not really absorbing what I heard!

My inattention was perhaps a bit impolite and would cause me inconvenience later, but eventually I would pick up what I needed to know about our copier. However, in today’s focus verse, Jeremiah spoke of gross inattention that would have eternal consequences. In his address to Judah, the prophet cited how the people heard God’s words yet would not let them sink into their hearts nor obey them. In verse 22 we read, “Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence?” Jeremiah reminded them that God was the One who put boundaries on the seas, gave rain at appropriate times, and blessed their harvest. Every aspect of their lives was in His Hands, but they were not grateful for what God favored them with, they ignored the warnings of His prophets, and they did not believe that God would mete punishment upon them for their wrongdoing.

God yearns for a people who listen, understand, and then respond to His Word. He has blessed us time and again, and He certainly is worthy of our respect. Our spiritual welfare is at stake, so we should pay careful attention to what He has to say to us.

In His infinite long-suffering and patience with us—the same long-suffering and patience that was extended to Judah—God employs a number of methods to get our attention and then to help us understand and respond to His words. His methods are intimately tailored to our personal circumstances, our ability to understand, and our level of receptivity. He may use personal circumstances—financial pressures, illness, or stress on the job. He may send a divine message through human instruments—a call to action from a

minister, a tug on our hearts through a song sung in a church service, or a ring of truth in a bit of careful admonition from a Christian friend. Often He speaks to us through His Word, helping a particular instruction or promise to come alive in a new way.

Today, let’s learn a lesson from the failure of Judah. We want to have hearts attuned to God, however His message may come. We want to listen attentively and absorb the lessons He sends our way. If we look to Him for help, He will gently help us to be attentive as we hear, understand, and follow His way.

BACKGROUND

Today’s text continues Jeremiah’s second sermon. While chapter 4 focuses on the external enemy that would eventually destroy Judah, chapter 5 highlights the foe from within, which was Judah’s hypocritical and idolatrous conduct. God instructed Jeremiah to search for one righteous man in Jerusalem. He promised that if one righteous man could be found, He would spare Judah from judgment, but Jeremiah found none. Even though the men of Jerusalem pretended to be righteous, their actions belied what they claimed. Jeremiah lamented that God’s previous judgments on Judah had gone unheeded and had only made them more resistant. He felt that the poor people had rejected God because of their ignorance, but thought surely the upper-class, more educated people who knew the way of the Lord would be willing to submit to God’s truth. However, he discovered that they, too, willfully rejected God and His righteousness. Because the people of Judah had “broken the yoke” and “burst the bonds” of God’s protection, they would find themselves in the clutches of wild animals (typifying the future enemy) that would utterly destroy them.

Even though God had blessed Judah with abundance, the people had ungratefully responded to God’s provision with immoral behavior. Consequently, Judah had given God no choice but to execute judgment. However, God promised that although the nation would suffer destruction, it would not be entirely destroyed (verses 10, 18). Both Israel and Judah had claimed that what the true prophets had said was not inspired by God, and their words of judgment would not come to pass. Therefore, God said that He would make His words as fire in Jeremiah’s mouth, and the people of Judah would become as wood for the fire to destroy. A powerful enemy would come and devour their crops and livestock, leaving them completely impoverished.

When the people questioned why God had sent such harsh judgment, Jeremiah was to remind them that it was because they had forsaken God and turned to false gods. They ignored the One who had the power to create the world and keep the sea within its boundaries. Their rebellion and sin had deprived them of the natural blessings of the former and latter rains. Evil men in Judah had grown wealthy through deceit, and they refused to consider the cause of the fatherless and needy.

The word *wonderful* in verse 30 meant “something to be wondered at; astounding,” and referred to the horrendous sin that had permeated the land. With the exception of Jeremiah, most of the prophets spoke falsely, without divine revelation, and the priests governed by their own authority rather than God’s commandments. Sadly, the people loved it that way, and God’s question, “What will ye do in the end thereof?” (verse 31) fell on deaf ears.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - A. The condemnation of the prophet
 - 2. The second sermon: Repentance or retribution
 - d. The corruption of Jerusalem (5:1-31)
 - (1) The apostasy of Jerusalem (5:1-9)
 - (2) The announcement of judgment (5:10-19)
 - (3) The sinfulness of the people (5:20-31)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What was Jeremiah unable to find in the streets of Jerusalem?

2. Why do you suppose the people of Judah ignored God’s prophets?

3. What methods has God used to get your attention or to help you to understand His precepts?

CONCLUSION

Persistent inattention to God is spiritually disastrous. We want to be attentive and obedient to Him.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.” (Jeremiah 6:16)

Where I grew up in rural Minnesota, the schools were far apart, and each usually served eight grades. When I began first grade, the three-mile walk to the school was a bit intimidating.

My father tried several routes from home to the schoolhouse to find the safest and shortest path, and then blazed a trail for my brother and me by marking the trees along that way. The trail went through a grove of white-barked birch trees (where the ax mark was easy to spot) through a swampy area, over a few hills, and past groves of oak and cottonwood growing alongside a small creek.

On the first day of school, my father took us along the path and instructed us carefully on how to follow the blazed trail. He knew that as long as we stayed on the path he had marked for us, we would be safe and would find our way to our destination. Within just a week or so, that path was very familiar. We knew each bend, each landmark, and just how long it would take us to get to the schoolhouse—as long as we didn’t play too much while we walked! It was a good way.

In our focus verse, Jeremiah once again implored the people of Judah to turn from their rebellion against God and choose the “good way” that God had provided for them. The “old paths” had been forsaken—the people wanted no part of God’s commandments, and had repeatedly rejected the warnings from God’s watchmen as they foretold the terrible dangers of proceeding on the path they were on. Jeremiah knew that if they persisted in that way, their destruction was inevitable. In spite of the people’s rejection, the prophet continued to condemn their sin and point them back to God.

Today, too, many people reject God’s good way and persist in following their own paths. They seemingly do not realize—or care—that the only way to make it to the right destination is to follow the path God has marked out in His Word. As heartbreaking as their response may be, we must, like Jeremiah, continue to share God’s Word. Our responsibility is to present the “old paths” and to pray that God will help people to long for the peace and security that comes only from walking in the way that He has designed.

BACKGROUND

This chapter concludes Jeremiah’s second sermon with an explicit description of the coming destruction of Jerusalem, and a reminder that true repentance was Judah’s only hope of preventing this dreadful calamity. Although Benjamin was incorporated with Judah, the location of Jeremiah’s hometown—Anathoth of Benjamin—may have been his reason for this specific appeal for his fellow countrymen to flee Jerusalem before it was besieged by the enemy. During this time, there were three types of warning systems to alert the people of approaching danger: the blowing of a trumpet, signal fires, and watchmen on the wall. Jeremiah instructed the Benjamites to blow the trumpet in Tekoa (located twelve miles south of Jerusalem), and set up signal fires in Beth-haccerem (literally meaning “house of the vineyard,” possibly a high watchtower in the midst of a vineyard outside Jerusalem).

Jeremiah’s reference to Jerusalem as a “delicate woman” may have been an implication of Jerusalem’s unfamiliarity with privation or adversity. The “shepherds with their flocks” referred to the Chaldean generals and their armies, and God stated that He would direct them to prepare for war against Judah. Their first plan would be a noon attack (a common time for an enemy to strike since it was the hottest part of the day), but the time would pass too quickly, and the enemy would instead attack at night. They would cut trees to create a mound around Jerusalem, which was typical of Chaldean sieges during that time.

In verse 9, the remnant alluded to those who would remain in Jerusalem after the first attack, and indicated the enemy would return to glean the remaining habitants until there were none left. Jeremiah told Judah that all ages and genders would be affected by this coming judgment, and the false prophets and priests who had deceived the people would also suffer the same fate as the common people.

God counseled Judah to walk in the “old paths,” a reference to the covenantal Law taught by Moses, but the people rejected God’s counsel. God had faithfully sent watchmen (prophets) to warn the people of impending danger, but they refused to listen. Judah’s religious ceremonies and burnt sacrifices would not atone for their sins because the people did not come with honest hearts, and God would lay stumbling blocks in their way that would cause them to fall and perish as a result of their spiritual rebellion.

Jeremiah impressed on Judah that the forthcoming enemy was cruel and merciless, and their military

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- ## A CLOSER LOOK

[illegible]

We can be confident that there is no better way to live than the path God has planned for us. Let us thank Him for His clear direction, and do our best to point others to the “good way” where they, too, will find rest for their souls.

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.” (Jeremiah 7:23)

Margaret Parker had drifted away from the faith of her childhood, and she was miserable. Though she attended various churches and prayed at times, she had no victory in her life. She knew her prayers were not going through to God, and sin began to take over her life more and more. One day, in despair she walked into her bedroom and cried out, “God, help me!” And God did! He reminded her of a Christian woman she had known, one who believed and lived by the Bible. Margaret wrote to her, and the woman wrote back and included some literature from the Apostolic Faith Church.

Margaret later recounted, “We had a settee before the fireplace, and I was sitting on it when I started reading that Apostolic Faith paper. I do not know when I knelt down, but I finished reading it on my knees. As I read, Jesus was there with me, helping me to say yes to everything I read. Yes, I would make restitution. Yes, I would ask forgiveness. Yes, I would give up those sinful practices. When I got to my feet, I was completely changed. God assured me that He would be with me all the way, a promise He has kept for many decades now.”

When Margaret promised God that she would obey Him and walk in the ways that He had commanded, she found peace and the victory in her life that she had longed for. God blessed her life from that day forward, and she had the opportunity to prove His promise many times. Her husband was saved, and their home was changed. Later in her life, she was afflicted with a terrible cancer on her body. God instantly healed her as she sat in a church service—when she took away the bandages after the service, the swelling, the lump, and all other evidences of the cancer had disappeared.

God kept His promise to Margaret, and He would have kept the promise given in our focus verse to the people of Judah if only they would have followed Him in obedience. Sadly, their reaction was the exact opposite of Margaret’s. We read in verse 24, “But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.”

Today, each of us can choose to follow God and enjoy the rich blessings He promises to those who will obey Him. Of course, we do not lose our free will when we become Christians. We daily will be presented with choices. Will we choose good or evil? Right or wrong? Will we choose to obey God or disobey? In every decision, God will be there to give us strength to do right when that is our choice.

Margaret found out that the benefits of doing so are incalculable—they lasted right up until the moment she stepped joyously into the presence of her Savior. The same testimony can be yours if you will choose to obey!

BACKGROUND

Chapter 7 begins Jeremiah’s third sermon, which he delivered from the gate of the Temple. He rebuked the people of Judah for bringing their idolatrous rituals into the Temple, and for believing that God would never destroy Jerusalem because the Temple was there. Jeremiah began his message with the assurance that if the people of Judah would deal with each other justly, take care of their poor, and turn from idolatry, God would allow them to continuously dwell in the land He had given to them.

Beginning in verse 8, Jeremiah adopted a harsher manner as he reminded Judah of its sinful ways. The people trusted in the lying words of the false prophets, and had turned the Temple into a place of vile behavior and thievery. In response to their declaration that the Temple ensured their safety, God reminded Judah of what had happened in Shiloh when the people of Israel disobeyed by removing the Ark of the Covenant from the Tabernacle to protect them in battle (1 Samuel 4). Just as He had done in Shiloh, God would bring judgment to the Temple in Jerusalem because of Judah’s waywardness.

In verse 15, “Ephraim” signified the Northern Kingdom, which had previously been taken into captivity. After instructing Jeremiah not to pray or intercede for the people of Judah, God continued with His indictment against them. The men, women, and children openly prepared and offered sacrifices to other gods. In verse 18, the “queen of heaven” may have referred to Ishtar (or her counterpart Ashtoreth), the goddess of fertility, sexuality, and war.

Under the Mosaic Law, eating the flesh of a burnt offering was forbidden. God stated in verse 21 that the people of Judah may as well combine their burnt offerings with their peace offerings (which were permitted to be eaten) because all of their sacrifices were

worthless in His eyes. God also declared that His principal commandments did not concern burnt sacrifices, but the fact that if they obeyed Him, He would be their God and it would be well with them.

In verse 31, Tophet (which meant “to burn”) was the name of an altar near Jerusalem in the Valley of Hinnom, and was associated with child sacrifice to the god Molech. Because of the dreadful judgment to come, Jeremiah instructed the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cut off their hair (a sign of mourning). The forthcoming retributions outlined in Jeremiah 7:32 through Jeremiah 8:3 were compelling reasons for Judah to mourn. Because of their Hebrew culture, there was no greater humiliation than to have their dead bodies exposed to the elements of nature. Jeremiah also stated that those who managed to survive the siege of Judah would prefer death over life because of the revolting living conditions in the land of their captivity.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - A. The condemnation of the prophet
 - 3. The third sermon: Distortion of worship
 - a. The declaration of the misuse of the Temple (7:1 — 8:3)
 - (1) The error of trusting in the Temple (7:1-15)
 - (2) The error of trusting in false prophets (7:16-20)
 - (3) The error of trusting in sacrifices (7:21-26)
 - (4) The error of trusting in Molech (7:27 — 8:3)
 - (a) The error (7:27-31)
 - (b) The result (7:32 — 8:3)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What promise is given in our focus verse, and what conditions are listed to receive it?

2. Why do you think God told Jeremiah not to pray for the people (verse 16)?

3. Name three blessings that obedience to God has brought into your life.

CONCLUSION

God promises that if we serve and obey Him, we will be blessed both now and in eternity. Let’s learn from the defiance of Judah, and do as God commands!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.” (Jeremiah 8:20)

An incident from the American Revolutionary War illustrates how great tragedy can result from neglect. Colonel Rahl, the commander of the British garrison in Trenton, New Jersey, had been ordered to construct defense entrenchments around the town but had not troubled to do so. Few precautions were taken, and the cannons intended for the protection of the town were used instead to add pomp and circumstance to parades by the garrison’s soldiers.

On a bitterly cold Christmas night, in spite of rumors that General George Washington was planning an attack, Rahl and his fellow soldiers were relaxing and enjoying the festivities of the holiday. In fact, Rahl was reputedly playing cards with fellow soldiers when a courier brought an urgent message stating that General Washington was crossing the Delaware River. Engrossed in what he was doing, Rahl put the letter in his pocket and did not bother to read it. He neglected an invaluable opportunity to prepare for a confrontation.

Early the next morning, Washington’s troops were discovered to be just a short distance away. Hurriedly, Rahl tried to rally his men to meet the attack, but it was too late. His neglect was his undoing—in the battle, Rahl was mortally wounded, many of his men were killed, and the rest of the regiment was captured. Ignoring the warnings cost the commander his life, his honor, and the life and liberty of his soldiers. The letter telling of the approach of General Washington’s troops was found in his pocket after his death.

Our focus verse is a dire warning against neglect. The Prophet Jeremiah was lamenting Judah’s rejection of the proffered grace of God, and his heart was overcome with grief for the people as he recognized that judgment was inevitable.

Today, we also look around us and see a world dying in sin—and ignoring the warnings God has provided that the end is near and judgment is coming. Do we have the passion for the lost that Jeremiah had? Let us pray that God will allow our hearts to be broken for our lost friends, relatives, neighbors, and associates! The door of mercy is still open, but neglect is deadly. The time is coming when the door will close, the harvest will be past, and the summer will be ended. May God help us to do everything in our power to encourage those whose lives touch ours to make their eternal preparation now, before it is too late!

BACKGROUND

Jeremiah 8, a part of the third sermon, begins a group of oracles, seemingly not in chronological order, which continued the general theme of God’s indictments against Judah. In verses 4-7, Jeremiah used analogies that were familiar to the people. If one fell, the natural instinct would be to rise up, and if one were to wander off the correct path, he would be inclined to retrace his steps and find the right course. The people of Judah knew the right way, so Jeremiah questioned why they were guilty of “perpetual backsliding,” which in the Hebrew meant “continual turning away.” Jeremiah compared Judah’s going its own way with a horse rushing into battle with no consideration of the danger involved. Migratory birds obey their natural instincts and accomplish what they were created to do, but the people of Judah, who were called to be God’s people, rejected God’s commandments and refused to consider the consequences their choices would bring.

In verses 8-13, God stated that the scribes’ copying of the Law was in vain, and the people were deceived in believing the Mosaic Law would benefit them when they had failed to obey God’s principles. Even though all of Judah was guilty of rejecting God’s words, the false prophets and priests were more accountable because they had appeased the people with false claims of peace. As a result of Judah’s lack of shame and refusal to repent, the people would be consumed and the fruitful land made barren.

In verses 14-17, Jeremiah spoke of the forthcoming enemy attack as though it had already occurred. The people in the countryside declared that they would flee to the fortified cities for protection. The Hebrew word for “silence” actually meant the “silence of death,” and because of Judah’s sin, the walled cities would offer no protection from poisoned water and death. Dan was on the northern border of Judah, and the “snorting of his horses” indicated that the enemy had arrived, and the land and all that was in it would be destroyed. Jeremiah described the nation’s adversaries as “serpents” and “cockatrices,” which could not be charmed, but would bite and devour.

In Jeremiah 8:18-22 and 9:1, Jeremiah’s intense grief over the horrible destiny of his people caused his heart to grow faint. He seemingly looked ahead to the time when the Jews would be in exile and would question why God had not spared them. The answer was that they had provoked God to anger with their idolatry. Gilead was well-known for its healing balm made from the resin of the mastic tree. The predictable

answer to both questions of whether there was still a balm in Gilead and a physician was “yes.” Jeremiah then asked why, if a remedy was available, his people were not healed. The answer was that Jeremiah’s people had not sincerely sought the help of God, the true “Physician.” This realization broke Jeremiah’s heart, causing him to weep continually for the fate of his people.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - A. The condemnation of the prophet
 - 3. The third sermon: Distortion of worship
 - b. The declaration of judgment
 - (1) The continued hardness of Jerusalem (8:4-7)
 - (2) The repudiation of God's Word (8:8-12)
 - (3) The certainty of destruction (8:13-17)
 - (4) The sorrow of the prophet (8:18—9:1)

A CLOSER LOOK

- 1.** In verse 5, what did the prophet say his people were constantly doing?

- 2.** Why do you think Jeremiah felt such a deep grief over the sins of the people?

- 3.** What steps can you take to prepare yourself to encourage others not to neglect spiritual matters?

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

Thank God, the door of mercy is still open. Let us determine, with the help of God, to encourage others in every way possible to prepare *now* for eternity!

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.” (Jeremiah 9:24)

Fanny J. Crosby, who lived from 1820 to 1915, wrote more than eight thousand hymns. When she was just a baby, improper treatment of an eye infection left her blind for life. She was only months old when her father died, and then her twenty-one-year-old mother went to work as a maid. Fanny’s grandmother cared for her and gave her Biblical instruction. Their landlady inspired Fanny in Scripture memorization, and sometimes she learned five chapters a week. While she was still young, she knew Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Proverbs, the Song of Solomon, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and many Psalms.

As an adult, Fanny sought for and received salvation, and through the years, her hymns have been an evangelistic tool and have touched many hearts. Inspired words seemed to pour out of her; often she wrote six or seven songs in a day. One time, a musician stopped at her home and played a song he had composed. He wanted Fanny to write some words, but he needed to catch a train in less than an hour. Quickly, Fanny wrote the words to “Safe in the Arms of Jesus.”

The focus verse says, “Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me.” Fanny Crosby knew God and His Word. One of the songs she wrote later in her life says,

*When my lifework is ended and I cross the swelling tide,
When the bright and glorious morning I shall see,
I shall know my Redeemer when I reach the other side,
And His smile will be the first to welcome me.*

*I shall know Him, I shall know Him,
And redeemed by His side I shall stand!
I shall know Him, I shall know Him
By the print of the nails in His hand.¹*

In contrast to Fanny, the people of Judah had ignored God, although they had the opportunity to know His Word. Moses had commanded them to rehearse the Law and to teach it to their children. The prophets had faithfully proclaimed God’s instructions to them, yet they chose to reject God.

Like Fanny Crosby and the people of Judah, each of us has a choice about whether or not we will “know” God. His instructions are available to us in the Bible. He is waiting for us to communicate with Him in prayer. The more we get to know and understand Him, the more we will love Him.

BACKGROUND

In this chapter, which is a portion of his third sermon, Jeremiah proclaimed three different laments concerning Judah’s sins, and the resulting judgment. He ended with God’s warning that men should not glory in themselves or their accomplishments, because judgment would come to all whose hearts were not right with Him.

Lodging places in the wilderness designated for traveling caravans were common in Jeremiah’s time, and he began his first lament with a yearning to reside in one of these dwellings. The conditions in these places were often filthy and unfavorable, yet Jeremiah stated that it would be better to lodge there than to dwell in adulterous and treacherous Jerusalem. Dishonesty had become commonplace, and no one could be trusted because of the deceit, slander, and duplicitous behavior. God responded to Jeremiah’s grievance by declaring that Judah’s sins had left Him no choice but to send judgment.

Beginning with verse 10, Jeremiah’s second lament was for the land itself, which would become a barren wilderness devoid of birds and livestock. Jerusalem would be a ruinous heap, and the other cities of Judah uninhabitable. The word “dragons” related to jackals, a scavenger animal. God’s response was that the reason for this harsh judgment was because the people had forsaken His Law and walked in the ways of their idolatrous forefathers. “Wormwood” and “gall” were bitter and poisonous herbs, and both words depicted the terrible sorrow and hardship Judah would suffer when the people would be taken captive in a strange land.

In verse 17, Jeremiah’s third lamentation began with a plea for Judah to summon professional mourners to bewail the calamities that would befall its inhabitants (it was common during that time to hire women mourners to sing death dirges at funerals and wail loudly to incite public mourning). Ultimately, the people of Judah would mourn the spoiling of Jerusalem and the loss of their homes. Jeremiah also exhorted the women of Judah to teach their daughters and neighbors the art of wailing because death would

come suddenly and unexpectedly, with no possible way of escape—a much greater calamity than having material possessions seized. The men of Judah would die in the fields, and no one would bury them—a grievous violation of the Jewish moral code.

God exhorted the people of Judah not to trust in their own wisdom, military might, or material wealth. The real source of wisdom was in understanding and knowing God and His delight in exercising loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. However, the day would come when God would punish all whose hearts were uncircumcised (unrighteous), and physical circumcision (an act of outer righteousness) would not save them from judgment.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - A. The condemnation of the prophet
 - 3. The third sermon: Distortion of worship
 - b. The declaration of judgment
 - (5) The evil of the people (9:2-9)
 - (6) The approach of judgment (9:10-16)
 - (7) The call for mourning (9:17-22)
 - c. The review of Judah's idolatry
 - (1) The warning to the uncircumcised (9:23-26)

A CLOSER LOOK

- 1. What did the people of Judah forsake?

- 2. What do you think it means to glory in God?

3. Knowing what God wants and what He delights in, what steps can we take to make sure He is delighting in us?

CONCLUSION

Through reading God's Word and communicating with Him, we can learn who God is, and how to glory in Him.

NOTES

1. Fanny J. Crosby, "My Savior First of All," Public domain.



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.”
(Jeremiah 10:23-24)

I was blessed to grow up in a home where my siblings and I knew we were loved. My parents also wisely established boundaries and guidelines for our behavior. We knew that we were expected to mind our parents, but being typical children, we did not always obey as we should have. When this happened, we knew we faced consequences.

When Mom and Dad dealt with an issue of disobedience, they often would ask the offenders what they thought should be done in terms of correction. Even back then, it impressed me that we often identified a punishment more severe than what was meted out by our parents. I think we realized that we usually deserved more than we got! My parents were merciful in their corrective measures, and were guided by the principle that good discipline would result in our learning and modifying our behavior appropriately.

As I look back on how I was raised, I appreciate the fact that my parents established rules, giving us guidance on what we needed to do. We certainly benefited by their clear instructions. In our focus verse, Jeremiah also saw the necessity for God to direct his steps and the steps of Judah as they responded to threats of invasion. Jeremiah accurately stated that we are not able to plan our own course—we desperately need direction from God in our lives.

Jeremiah’s prayer also included a request for mercy. He knew that correction was in order and deserved, but he asked the Lord not to discipline in anger. If correction was given as deserved, Jeremiah indicated he would be “brought to nothing.”

How grateful we should be that God deals with us in mercy, and that He is willing to give us guidance on how we are to live. We will fail miserably without God’s help. Like Jeremiah, we must recognize that we cannot direct our own lives successfully without God’s intervention. We need to look to Him to direct our steps, and do our best to respond rightly to His merciful correction.

BACKGROUND

This chapter concludes Jeremiah’s third message, known as the “Temple sermon.” Some Bible

scholars believe that Jeremiah may have been addressing the Northern Kingdom of Israel, which was already in Assyrian captivity at that time, while others think that Jeremiah could have used the name “Israel” in reference to Judah. In either case, Jeremiah’s exhortation was to refrain from becoming educated in the religious customs of the heathen, whose carefully crafted graven images lacked the ability to speak or move. The word *brutish* in verse 8 meant “of a stupid nature; unfeeling; unintelligent.” Tarshish was located in Spain or Sicily and was well known for its silver. The location of Uphaz is uncertain, but it may have referred to Ophir, noted for its gold. Blue and purple dyes were rare and very costly, and denoted royalty. Although skilled workmen used these precious materials to fashion magnificent sculptures, their work was in vain because these false deities were futile and would ultimately cease to exist.

In contrast, Jeremiah declared that none were comparable with the living God, the “King of the nations,” whose wisdom far surpasses that of any man. His wrath would make the earth tremble, and no nation could withstand it. God created all that is in the earth, and the elements obey the sound of His Voice. Both the makers and worshipers of the graven images were foolish to prefer their false gods because when trouble came, their idols could not help them. The God of Jacob was different from the gods of the heathen nations. His name is “the LORD of hosts” and Israel was the tribe of His inheritance.

Jeremiah urged the inhabitants of Jerusalem to pack their possessions in preparation for exile. Although Jerusalem was thought of as an impenetrable fortress, God warned that the inhabitants would be forcefully removed from the land all at once, as a stone flung from a sling. The “tabernacle” in verse 20 may have referred to the dwelling places (tents) of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, although some scholars believe it may have alluded to the Temple. The “pastors” were the religious and civil leaders who had neglected to seek the Lord and properly care for their “flocks” (the people). The pastor’s foolish behavior would cause their flocks to be scattered. The word *bruit* meant “rumor,” and indicated that the rumor of the enemy’s invasion was soon to become a reality.

Jeremiah concluded his message with the acknowledgment that man cannot uprightly order his own steps, and is in need of God’s divine guidance. He cried out for God to render correction, but to temper it with His mercy, for justice alone would bring total destruction whereas mercy offered hope. He then

petitioned God to pour out wrath on the nations who did not worship Him, and who had been guilty of persecuting Israel. While Jeremiah understood that Judah had provoked God to anger, he apparently felt that the heathen nations deserved the greater judgment.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - A. The condemnation of the prophet
 - 3. The third sermon: Distortion of worship
 - c. The review of Judah's idolatry
 - (2) The contrast of idolatry and God (10:1-16)
 - (a) The folly of idolatry (10:1-5)
 - (b) The glory of God (10:6-16)
 - (3) The judgment upon idolatry (10:17-25)

A CLOSER LOOK

- 1. What requests did Jeremiah make to God in verses 23-25?**

- 2.** Based on verse 10, what do you think God wants us to understand about Him?

[illegible]

- 3.** What are some ways God might give us direction for our lives?

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

Just as Jeremiah stayed true to his mission and allowed the Lord to direct his life and guide his steps, so must we also. Even in the face of adversity, we must not waver from God and His direction.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“For I earnestly protested unto your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, even unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice.” (Jeremiah 11:7)

Do you take weather warnings seriously? Bob and Ann Dixson of Greensburg, Kansas, did so on May 4, 2007. They knew the weather service had been tracking a storm, and they had about twenty minutes of warning that it was severe and headed for their town. When the warning sirens blared, Bob and Ann went to their basement, surrounded themselves with furniture, and pulled area rugs over themselves. Ann said, “When the tornado was over, there was nothing above us. The whole house was gone, but we were unharmed.”¹

When Ann was growing up, her mother had always taken tornado threats seriously. No doubt the family lost track of the number of times they went to their basement and no tornado came. Still, on May 4, 2007, Bob and Ann heeded the warning. The Dixsons had a 1912 Victorian house, which they could have thought safe because it had probably survived many storms, but they took the necessary precautions.

Often, however, people do not heed the warnings. Why? Perhaps they do not have a place of safety or they are sleeping and do not hear the alerts. Or maybe they just don’t think the storm will come to their area or be as bad as the prediction.

In Jeremiah’s time, the people of Judah had received many warnings. The focus verse says that God “earnestly protested.” He exhorted, warned, and pleaded with them to obey His Voice from the day they left Egypt until Jeremiah’s day, over eight hundred years later. He did not tell them just once, but many times. If they would have heeded, all of God’s covenant promises, His favor, and mercy, would have been theirs. The offer was open for many generations, but they stubbornly refused. Verse 8 says, “Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear.” And so God said He would bring judgment upon them.

Likewise, today the Lord warns, encourages, and reminds us. To do what? To obey His Voice, make the changes we need to make, take the action He has been calling us to. If we heed, His blessings await us. His Word—including His promises and judgments—is fully reliable, and what He has said will come to pass. Today is a great day to heed God’s warnings and be certain that we are doing what He wants.

BACKGROUND

Jeremiah’s fourth sermon to Judah, begun in this chapter, opens with a reference to the covenant God made with Moses at Mount Sinai. God had fulfilled His part of the covenant by liberating the Israelites from Egypt and giving them the Promised Land. The Sinai covenant contained promised blessings if Israel would be obedient, as well as curses that would accompany disobedience. However, Judah and its forefathers had walked in their own way and served other gods. God warned them that the curses in the covenant would come to pass as a result of their wickedness.

In verse 9, the conspiracy may have alluded to Judah’s resistance to King Josiah’s attempts to reinstate the Sinai covenant after a copy of the Law was discovered in the Temple. The people of Judah and Jerusalem ignored Josiah’s appeal for reform, and turned back to their idolatrous ways.

God said that because of their breach of the covenant He would not respond to their cries for deliverance when judgment came. Judah’s pagan gods, equal to the number of cities in the nation, and its incense altars for Baal, equivalent to the number of streets in Jerusalem, would be unable to save them in their time of trouble.

For the second time, God admonished Jeremiah not to pray for the people of Judah because He would turn a deaf ear. God’s beloved people had forsaken Him and joined themselves to other gods—yet they continued to offer sacrifices and practice their ordinances in God’s House, the Temple.

The olive tree was valuable in Palestine, and its oil was used for light, cooking, body salve, and medical remedies. It was also considered an emblem of prosperity and beauty. God likened Judah to a green olive tree that would be disfigured and destroyed by a great storm. Even though God had “planted” the nation and desired that its people would prosper, their wickedness and idolatry had caused Him to pronounce evil against them.

In verses 18-23, Jeremiah found out about a plot against his life by the men of his hometown, Anathoth. God had apparently revealed their conspiracy, and Jeremiah was astounded at how unsuspecting he had been of their intentions. Jeremiah then asked God to vindicate him and bring justice to those who were behind this scheme. God assured Jeremiah that He would destroy those of Anathoth who sought to take his life.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - A. The condemnation of the prophet
 - 4. The fourth sermon: The broken covenant
 - a. The exhortation to obey the covenant (11:1-5)
 - b. The violation of the covenant (11:6-13)
 - c. The abrogation of the covenant (11:14-17)
 - d. The hostility at Anathoth (11:18-23)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why did God tell Jeremiah not to pray for the people of Judah?

2. Why do you think the people of Judah worshiped so many gods?

3. The men of Jeremiah's own town were conspiring against him. How will God help us when ones we know and love are against us?

CONCLUSION

The promises of God will work on our behalf if we obey His Voice. If we heed His warnings, we will be glad that we did.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?” (Jeremiah 12:5)

A few years ago, my friends and I decided to go white water rafting on a river that was new to us. We looked at a map and saw that there were three main big drops where the river changed elevation dramatically. I had a slight worry that I might be getting too old for such a thing, yet it sounded challenging and exciting.

As I got into the raft with my friends, I felt a little nervous. We hit a few small runs and I began to relax a little. But I still felt dread for the challenging “big water” that was coming. We had packed lunches, and I asked that we not stop to eat until we had passed all three big drops, so I could relax.

After traveling for some time through small drops and falls, we hit our first big one. It was scary, but we made it, and that helped my confidence. When we made it through the second drop, I was feeling a bit more brave. Some time later, we came to the third big drop. What a relief it was when we got through it! Then we stopped for lunch, and I was set to enjoy the rest of the trip because the worst was behind us.

As we sat on the bank eating our lunches, some men came by on kayaks, and we talked with them. Imagine my horror when I was informed that we had not even hit the first big drop yet! I thought things were as tough and scary as they would get, but I was wrong. However, going through those seemingly “big” drops actually prepared me for the huge ones that were to come.

In today’s text, Jeremiah was facing far more than white water rapids; he had people around him who wanted to take his life. Yet in the focus verse, Jeremiah was challenged by God. Even though the previous troubles he had faced had been hard, more difficult things were coming. Jeremiah was not to let the smaller challenges get him down. Instead, he was to meet them, and then he could face the bigger ones with confidence.

In our Christian walks we are going to have trials. We can either let those trials discourage us, or we can use them as faith-building experiences to make us stronger in the Lord. At times, we may be tempted to question God as Jeremiah did. Yet, God knows what

He is doing. When we do not understand why we have to go through a trial, we can rest assured that there is a bigger plan involved. We should remember that the trial of our faith will bring patience and endurance. It will make our faith stronger, so we can be prepared for whatever is coming.

We can be assured that all things do work together for our good, and that God has a perfect plan for our lives. We do not have to fear the future!

BACKGROUND

Today’s text concludes Jeremiah’s fourth sermon. Shaken by the treacherous actions of his relatives and fellow citizens of Anathoth in their efforts to take his life, Jeremiah questioned God about why the wicked seemingly prospered in their evil doings. It appeared to him that God had planted the evildoers in Judah and allowed them to succeed and flourish when, even though they claimed to serve God, their hearts were far from Him. Jeremiah stated that God knew his heart and his desire to serve God, and he asked God to vindicate him by singling out those who were wicked, just as sheep were separated for slaughter. Jeremiah questioned why the land and animals had suffered as judgment for wrongdoing, rather than those who committed the transgressions.

Beginning in verse 5, God’s response focused on Jeremiah rather than the evildoers of Judah. God used two proverbs to make the analogy that if Jeremiah was overwhelmed by the smaller hardships, how could he withstand the intensifying adversity that was to come? God then warned Jeremiah against trusting his own family or neighbors in Anathoth, who had deceitfully caused many to turn against him.

God told Jeremiah that He had been compelled to forsake His beloved people because of their rejection of Him. God had claimed Judah for His heritage, but instead of obeying Him, they had snarled at Him like a roaring lion, and had defiled the inheritance that God had given to them. Speckled birds, with unusual markings, were susceptible to attacks from other birds. Judah was as a “speckled bird” to the surrounding nations, and the rulers of these nations and their armies would devour Judah and its inhabitants. The land, which had been fruitful and bountiful, would become desolate and barren.

In verse 14, God warned the Gentile nations that those who chose to harm God’s inheritance, Judah, would also be “plucked” from their lands by their enemies. God then said that after He had removed them from their lands, He would benevolently give back

their heritage if they would acknowledge that the God of Israel is the only true God, and would serve Him only. However, the nation that refused to obey God’s directive would be completely destroyed.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - A. The condemnation of the prophet
 - 4. The fourth sermon: The broken covenant
 - e. The prayer of the prophet (12:1-4)
 - f. The reply of Jehovah (12:5-17)
 - (1) The tests (12:5-6)
 - (2) The judgment on Judah (12:7-13)
 - (3) The restoration of Judah (12:14-17)

A CLOSER LOOK

- 1. Why did God say the whole land was desolate?

- 2. Why do you think God allows the wicked to prosper for a time?

- 3. How can we avoid being discouraged when we have trials?

CONCLUSION

We know that God wants to strengthen our faith, so by His grace, we can overcome anything that will ever come our way.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.” (Jeremiah 13:23)

For years I have worked with men and women in the prison system and have seen a common thread in the mindset of those getting close to being released on parole. In many cases, these inmates initially come to chapel services and confess they need God in their lives. However, once they are within a few weeks of getting out, they fall away from their chapel service attendance and tell their fellow inmates they can make it on their own. They seem to think they have it all figured out, and intend never to do anything that will bring them back into the penal system.

For example, I remember one man who seemed very sincere and told me that once he was out, he was going to come to every service we had at our church. Sadly, after a few weeks of attendance, he missed more and more, and I could not convince him that he needed God in order to live right. He would tell me he was doing great and was very busy with his activities. Then, after a few months, I saw him in the prison again, where he came to me frustrated and angry at himself. “Why did I do such a stupid thing?” he asked me. He then confessed his sins to God and admitted he could not change himself. When he was honestly repentant, God changed his heart.

Prisoner or not, it is very hard for mankind to admit that he needs God’s help in order to escape from the bondage with which Satan has ensnared him. During a time of crisis, he may call out for God to help, but then, when the crisis is over, he continues in trying to succeed on his own.

God, of course, is fully aware of this tendency in the human race. In Jeremiah’s time, He used the leopard as an illustration. These animals have spots naturally, and there is nothing they can do to alter them. Nor can a person change his skin color. The human race can no more successfully change the inbred tendencies of the carnal heart with which each of us was born.

Even if some of its symptoms can be corrected, only through the transforming power of the Blood of Jesus can individuals be transformed from sinners into believers. This is the wonderful message of hope that the Gospel extends and we have the privilege to share. Even when situations look impossible, God can do what man cannot, because He can change the heart.

BACKGROUND

Jeremiah’s fifth sermon to the inhabitants of Judah began with an object lesson concerning God’s relationship with Judah. A girdle (also known as a loin-cloth) was frequently worn to secure outer clothing. Girdles worn by the common people were made of leather, but the linen that God instructed Jeremiah to wear denoted a finer girdle such as those worn by the priests. God first charged Jeremiah to wear the girdle without washing it, which would have caused the linen to become soiled. After a time, God told Jeremiah to travel to the Euphrates River (a distance of 250-400 miles) and bury the girdle under a rock. The fact that the Euphrates River was in Babylon, the place of Judah’s impending captivity, may have been God’s reason for sending Jeremiah there.

After “many days,” God told Jeremiah to go back to the Euphrates River and retrieve the girdle, where he discovered that it was totally ruined and worthless. God used this illustration to make the comparison that just as Jeremiah’s unwashed loin-cloth became soiled and of no value after being buried in the mud, Judah had become tarnished and useless to God because of the people’s unwillingness to accomplish His purpose. Comparable to how a man would tie a loin-cloth snugly to his body, God had clothed Himself with Israel and Judah in a covenant relationship, but their sin and idolatry had marred and destroyed the pure bond that God desired.

Jeremiah’s edict that “every bottle shall be filled with wine” may have reflected a well-known proverb symbolizing peace and prosperity, thus initiating the confident response from the people of Judah. However, God said He would fill the inhabitants of Judah with “drunkenness” that would cause strife and confusion among the people, and ultimately their destruction. In verses 15-17, Jeremiah pled with the people to set aside their pride, give ear to God’s warnings, and give Him glory, because God had spoken and His judgment would come to pass if they did not turn from their wicked ways. The king and queen in verse 18 probably referred to King Jehoiachin and his mother, Nehushta, referred to in 2 Kings 24:8-20.

Jeremiah compared Judah to a flock of sheep that had been ravaged by the enemy from the north, and he questioned how Judah would respond when the Babylonian conqueror would set over them former allies who had been militarily trained by Judah. He associated the pain of this scenario with a woman in labor. Jeremiah stated that if the people of Judah



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? art not thou he, O LORD our God? therefore we will wait upon thee: for thou hast made all these things.” (Jeremiah 14:22)

In 2007, due to the lack of rainfall, the southeastern part of the United States was experiencing a severe drought. The water level in lakes and rivers had fallen to record lows in the states of Georgia, Alabama, and Florida. Even water restrictions put in place by the various state governments did not do enough to conserve much-needed resources.

On Tuesday, November 13, 2007, hundreds of people from the region came to the Georgia State Capitol to join Governor Sonny Perdue in prayer, asking God to send rain. Although there were many who protested against this public prayer, Governor Perdue and hundreds of others recognized that they needed God’s help in this very desperate situation. There was nothing man could do to produce the necessary rain, and God was their only hope. Following is a portion of Governor Perdue’s prayer that day: “Our Father, as we come before You today, we acknowledge that we are needy people. It is You that we need, and it is Your power and Your miracles that we need. And Father, we call upon You today to meet that need. We do believe that You are the Creator who established the water, and the land, and the air, and even us. God, we need You—we need rain. Father, may we go forth from this place today with bended hearts toward You, acknowledging our total and utter dependence upon You, moment by moment, for Your blessings. Father, forgive us, and lead us to honor You as You honor us with the showers of blessings. Thank You, Lord, for the rain to come. Amen.”

The next day, a cold front extending from Alabama to southern Pennsylvania produced several thunderstorms and desperately needed rain, and by Wednesday night, rain came to the State of Georgia. And it did not stop in a day. The month of December produced above-average rainfall. Although there were some who discounted this answer to prayer, stating that it made a very small dent in the overall drought, those who had prayed and believed for rain knew that God had intervened on their behalf.

In our text, Judah was also suffering from a severe drought. God had ignored the people’s cries for help because they were not sincerely repentant for their

sins and their rejection of Him. God was not indifferent to their plight, but the people needed to turn from their idol worship back to God, and seek His will for their lives. In our focus verse, Jeremiah acknowledged that God was the only One who could provide rain, and Judah would continue to wait on Him for deliverance. God was the Creator of all things, including the rain, and if the people would repent, He would answer their prayers and bring the help that they needed.

Do you have a need in your life that only God can provide? As you take it before the Lord, totally submitting your will and your heart to God, you can be confident that God will supply “showers of blessings” and an answer to every need in your Christian walk. He has the solution to any circumstance you may be going through. Look to Him today, and believe that He will hear and answer your prayer!

BACKGROUND

Because of Judah’s sin and idolatry, God had withheld the necessary rain that was needed to sustain its crops and water supply. Jeremiah’s sixth sermon, related in this chapter and chapter 15, begins with a reference to Judah’s plight of severe drought and famine caused by lack of rainfall. In Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside, water was nonexistent for both the rich and the poor. The ground had become cracked and useless for growing crops, resulting in a shortage of food. The troubles of the animals and their distressed panting for food and water also depicted the severity of the situation. In desperation, the people of Judah covered their heads as a sign of mourning, and frantically cried out to God. They requested that God deliver them for His Name’s sake, indicating that God’s reputation was on the line because of His covenant relationship with Judah.

God saw that the people’s insincere prayers were only meant to alleviate their suffering, and did not include a willingness to turn from their idolatrous ways. God declared that because they persisted in wandering away from Him, He would not accept their prayers and would continue to send judgment for their iniquity. Furthermore, God told Jeremiah not to pray for Judah’s deliverance, because regardless of how much fasting, burnt sacrifices, or praying the people of Judah did, God would not hear their cries, but would continue to “consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence.” Jeremiah attempted to place the blame for Judah’s behavior on the false prophets, who had promised the people deliverance and peace. God acknowledged that the false prophets

were guilty of prophesying lies, and would face certain judgment, but that did not exonerate the people who were guilty of listening to the false prophets.

The thought of Judah's impending adversity caused Jeremiah to cry out in intense grief, while at the same time expressing God's sorrow for His people. In spite of God's instruction that he not pray for Judah, Jeremiah openly confessed the sins of his people and pleaded with God to not break His covenant with them for His name's sake. Jeremiah stated that none of the gods of the Gentiles could supply the needed rain, but only God, the Creator of all things. Therefore, Judah's only hope was to wait on Him.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - A. The condemnation of the prophet
 - 6. The sixth sermon: The drought
 - a. The description of the drought (14:1-6)
 - b. The intercession of the prophet
 - (1) The prophet's first prayer (14:7-12)
 - (a) The plea (14:7-9)
 - (b) The reply (14:10-12)
 - (2) The prophet's second prayer (14:13-18)
 - (a) The plea concerning the false prophets (14:13)
 - (b) The reply concerning the fate of false prophets (14:14-18)
 - (3) The prophet's third prayer
 - (a) The plea for Judah (14:19-22)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How did the plowmen react to the drought?

2. Why do you think Judah continued to heed false prophets when it was evident they spoke lies?

3. What steps should we take when we need an answer to prayer for a situation in our lives?

CONCLUSION

God is sensitive to our needs. As we search our hearts and submit ourselves to Him, we can be assured that He hears our cries for help and He is already working on our behalf.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“O LORD, thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy longsuffering: know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke.” (Jeremiah 15:15)

Years ago, as a young convert, taking a stand for the Gospel was a priority with me. However, it seemed that the stronger the stand I took, the worse things became. Family members ridiculed me when I tried to tell them about the Lord. Fellow workers would become verbally aggressive when I refused to go along with their worldly conversation. During those times, the thought would cross my mind: Lord, what’s going on here? I felt I was doing my part, so why was God allowing this?

In our focus verse, Jeremiah was facing persecution more extreme than most of us can imagine. For many years, the people of Judah had ridiculed him and resisted his messages, at times plotting to take his life. He was saying, “Lord, You know what I’m going through now!” Perhaps the enemy of the soul was trying to convince the prophet, in his vulnerable and weakened condition, that God wasn’t living up to His end of the bargain. Jeremiah cried out to God to remember him and give him help.

The same enemy would like to present thoughts in our minds that would cause us to doubt God; he would like us to think that God has forgotten about us. We need to realize that God’s ways are not our ways, and remind ourselves that He is in control. If we have to go through fiery trials, God’s marvelous grace is able to guide and sustain us.

God reassured Jeremiah, reiterating His promises if Jeremiah would continue to fulfill his calling. God had not forgotten Jeremiah, and He will not forget us. The path where God leads us may have a few bumps and turns that we feel are unnecessary and painful. Yet we must realize He knows exactly what is happening to us and what is best. By clinging to Him and His promises, we can live a victorious life in spite of our circumstances.

BACKGROUND

This chapter, the conclusion of the sixth sermon, begins with God’s response to Jeremiah’s intercessory prayer at the end of chapter 14. God stated that even if Moses and Samuel were to plead for Judah, He would not relent in His judgment against them. If the people of Judah asked where they would go, God instructed

Jeremiah to say that some would die from pestilence, some by the sword, some from starvation, and some would go into captivity. Those who died by the sword would be devoured and torn by dogs, birds, and wild beasts.

Manasseh was considered Judah’s most wicked king, and was responsible for reversing the religious reforms established by his father, Hezekiah. He reinstated idol worship, built pagan altars in the Temple, and sacrificed his own children. Manasseh’s later repentance (see 2 Chronicles 33) and attempted reformations occurred too late to have much effect on backslidden Judah.

God questioned if anyone would pity or mourn when Jerusalem was judged, since the people of Judah had forsaken Him, the only One who had really cared for them. Because of Judah’s perpetual backsliding, God said He was weary with providing mercy. The people of Judah would be scattered like the chaff, and a great number of their women would be widowed and bereaved of their children. A woman with seven sons was considered greatly blessed, but if those sons were all killed, she would feel like the light had gone out of her life.

Overwhelmed by the depth of resistance from the people, Jeremiah cried out that his mother also had reason to grieve because she had borne a son who was despised by the whole world, and he compared himself to a cursed money lender. God reassured Jeremiah that it would be well with him for the rest of his days, and God would cause his enemies to make supplication to him in times of affliction and distress. God told Jeremiah that the “iron” of Judah could not withstand the “northern iron and steel” of the Chaldean army. Judah would be plundered by the Babylonians, and the people of Judah taken captive in a foreign land, because of God’s anger against them.

Jeremiah pleaded with God to be longsuffering and not force him into captivity. He acknowledged the feeling of joy he had experienced through devouring God’s Word, but he bemoaned that God’s decree to preach indignation against Judah had caused a breach between him and his people. Jeremiah lamented his intense pain at the thought of his impending suffering at the hand of his adversaries, and questioned whether God had somehow failed to keep His promises.

God’s response implied a rebuke and exhorted Jeremiah to refrain from degrading words, and to speak words of truth and value. God encouraged him to stand firm as an example and beacon of hope for the people of Judah, rather than let their actions

discourage him. God followed His rebuke with the reassurance that He would strengthen Jeremiah as a fortified wall, and his enemies would not be able to triumph over him. God also promised to save and deliver Jeremiah from those who meant him harm.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - A. The condemnation of the prophet
 - 6. The sixth sermon: The drought
 - b. The intercession of the prophet
 - (3) The prophet's third prayer
 - (b) The reply concerning the destruction of Judah (15:1-9)
 - c. The sorrow of the prophet (15:10-18)
 - d. The encouragement of the prophet (15:19-21)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How was God going to punish these people?

2. Why was it significant that God said Moses and Samuel would not be able to change His mind regarding Judah?

3. Jeremiah's closeness to God let him express his innermost thoughts to Him. How can expressing our feelings to God help us become stronger spiritually?

CONCLUSION

There are times when our human logic will question why things are the way they are. Yet we must realize that God sees the whole picture and knows what is best for each and every problem we may encounter.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“For mine eyes are upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes.” (Jeremiah 16:17)

After church one Sunday when I was about thirteen years old, I went to a friend’s house for dinner. There was a box factory nearby, and in the afternoon we went there and climbed up about thirty feet to the top of a stack of wood that was stored outside. We were watchful and made sure no one saw us, and when we got to the top, we carefully positioned ourselves in the middle of the stack. Sure that we were securely hidden, we spent the next couple of hours smoking. When we got back to my friend’s house, his mother asked us where we had been, and we made up an excuse. She said, “I want to show you boys something.” She took us up to the stair landing and quietly directed our eyes out the window. Just imagine our shock and dismay when we realized that the top of the woodpile was easily seen from that window! We understood that our activities had been observed, and we knew full well that we were in trouble.

In Jeremiah’s time, the people of Judah were comfortable in their sins, and they may have hoped that their iniquities were hidden from God. They seemed to have a false assurance that God would never abandon them, no matter what they did. But God had seen and noted their sinful attitudes and all the evil actions they had committed. God’s mercy had run out for Judah, and serious punishment was soon to come.

Nothing escapes God’s attention, and He cannot be deceived. Human nature has not changed since the time of Jeremiah; many people would still like to think they can hide their sins from God. It will not work. God already knows about each action, just as He knew about Judah’s great sins of idolatry and unbelief, and my friend and me smoking on the woodpile. Someday, unforgiven sin will be punished.

The good news is that sin can be forgiven and judgment mitigated. When a person confesses and repents of his sin, God chooses to forget it. How much better than trying to hide it! As God’s followers, this is what we want to share with those who have not yet given their lives to Him, for this is a true hope.

BACKGROUND

This chapter begins Jeremiah’s seventh sermon to the people of Judah. Jewish men were expected to marry by the age of twenty. God’s commandment for

Jeremiah not to marry was a symbol to Judah that it was preferable to remain single than to endure the suffering that the parents and children would experience during the Babylonian invasion. God also prohibited Jeremiah from participating in funerals or mourning rituals. Though this was contradictory to the custom of that day, it was symbolic of the people’s looming inability to properly mourn or bury their dead during the Babylonian destruction, and of God’s unwillingness to provide comfort or peace during their time of need. Furthermore, God forbade Jeremiah from partaking of any feasts, such as weddings or other celebrations, as a sign that times of merriment would soon cease from the land of Judah.

The Hebrew word translated *imagination* in verse 12 meant “stubbornness of heart,” inferring that the people of Judah had stubbornly refused to turn from the idolatry of their forefathers, and had become increasingly evil in their deeds. Because of their wickedness, God said He would violently remove them from their land and send them to a strange land where idolatry was customary and where they would no longer experience God’s favor.

Offering a ray of hope, God stated that the time would come when He would not only deliver Judah from Babylonian captivity, but He would deliver all Israelites from the lands where they had been taken captive and restore them to the land He had given to their forefathers. This restoration would be so monumental that it would surpass Israel’s exodus from Egypt to Canaan, and would become the benchmark by which Israel was known. This prophecy was fulfilled to some degree at their return from exile in Babylon, but more completely in the twentieth century when Israel again became a nation.

However, in Jeremiah’s day, Judah still faced judgement for its iniquity and God said He would send many invaders to “fish” and “hunt” the people of Judah in every possible hiding place. Judah would be required to recompense “double” for its sins, because the people had polluted the land with their appalling sacrifices to idols, including human sacrifices. Some commentators believe that the word *double* alluded to two separate judgments, while others feel it referenced the severity of the judgment.

Jeremiah envisioned that through God’s dealings with Judah, the Gentile nations would one day come to realize that the idolatry of their fathers was futile and unprofitable. God further declared that His actions concerning Judah would cause the whole world to know that God is Lord of all.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - A. The condemnation of the prophet
 - 7. The seventh sermon: The sign of the unmarried prophet
 - a. The symbolic separations of the prophet (16:1-9)
 - b. The fate of Judah (16:10-13)
 - c. The ultimate restoration of Judah (16:14-21)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why did Jeremiah not marry?

2. Considering Jeremiah's pronouncements of God's judgment on His chosen people, how do you think the prophet could maintain such confidence that God would bring the Gentiles to Himself?

3. How can we be similar to Jeremiah in our confidence in God?

CONCLUSION

No sin is hidden from God, but His mercy is extended to those who will seek Him.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.” (Jeremiah 17:7-8)

“You are accused of collaborating with the murderer of Dr. Kao . . .”

This bombshell accusation and the consequent deportation was the way the Communists chose to close their dealings with Arthur and Wilda Mathews. Little did they know that this “punishment” was an answer to prayer! These two missionaries, along with their little girl, were among the last of the missionaries to leave China after the Communists assumed control of the country.

The two years leading up to that point were woven through with a pattern of menace and hatred calculated to break the faith and spirit of this godly couple, and spoil their testimony before the watching and wondering Chinese people. Isolated in their bare kitchen in far northwest China on the Tibetan border, they were driven to desperate straits of poverty, and sorely tested on every hand. At home, a faithful band of believers watched and prayed.

In a prayer meeting back on the homefront one morning, one of the women holding them up before God was led to pray, “O Lord, keep their leaf green in times of drought!” God answered that prayer, and the missionaries proved the truth of Jeremiah 17:8. Through days of hardship and suffering, there was an unseen Source of spiritual nourishment. Instead of drying up “when heat cometh,” they learned priceless lessons as they leaned on God.

At a time when their circumstances seemed most desperate, Arthur wrote home, “Our ‘leaf’ does not wither for we are His ‘planting.’ And planting includes a lot of preparation of site with a view to constant supply of water. It means selection of the tree, its type, its maturity, etc. Our planting beside these waters means that for our leaf to wither, there must be a denial by us of supply sources. May that never be true of us!”

Communism may not be the cause of your “drought,” but the specific cause of the drying up of life’s joys is incidental. When the heat comes and our surroundings are dry and desolate, we can find a

secret Source of nourishment that the deadly drought cannot reach. God can and will sustain us. Arthur and Wilda Mathews, and many others, have proved that—and we can too!

BACKGROUND

In this seventh sermon, Jeremiah used the “pen of iron” and “point of a diamond” to illustrate how deeply ingrained Judah’s sins were. Just as diamond tips were used to engrave the toughest surfaces, wickedness had etched itself on the hard hearts of the people of Judah. Jeremiah also stated that Judah’s sins were engraved on the “horns of their altars,” indicating that their sins had become embedded in their religious rituals as well. Because Judah had corrupted the Law and Temple worship with its idolatry, the children were no longer able to recall the appropriate way to honor God, and only had knowledge of the high places and groves where pagan gods were worshiped.

“O my mountain in the field” may have alluded to Jerusalem, which was a mountainous city in the center of Judah. God stated that Judah’s possessions and land would be given as plunder to the invaders, and because the people had angered God with their perpetual sin, they would forfeit the heritage that He had given them and be forced to serve their captors in a strange land.

God emphasized that those who put their trust in man rather than God were like a parched shrub (heath) in the barren desert, referring to Judah’s dependence on other nations rather than turning their hearts to God. In contrast, God said He would bless those who put their trust and hope in Him. They would be as well-watered trees with deep roots, and in difficult times, they would not be overwhelmed or anxious, but would continuously bear fruit.

Jeremiah referred to a familiar proverb regarding a partridge which stole the eggs of another bird and nested on them until they were hatched, after which the hatchlings deserted the partridge in favor of their true mother. Jeremiah paralleled this proverb with those who had obtained their wealth unjustly, stating that their ill-acquired wealth would desert them, leaving them to be counted as fools.

Jeremiah declared that the lofty Throne of God was the true place of sanctuary for the people of Judah, and all who forsook God, the hope of Israel, would be obliterated like writing in the dust. Jeremiah appealed to God for vindication from the onslaught of those who doubted his words, stating that he had not fled from the task of delivering the words that God

had given him, nor had he desired to hasten the calamity declared on his people. Affirming that God was his hope in time of trouble, Jeremiah pleaded with God not to abandon him, and requested that his persecutors be destroyed with “double destruction.”

God told Jeremiah to stand in the gates of Jerusalem and instruct the king and people of Judah to observe the Sabbath as set forth in the Mosaic Law. God had established the Sabbath as a day of physical rest and a time to honor God, but Judah had treated the Sabbath as any other day. Jeremiah’s pleas fell on deaf ears, indicative of Judah’s overall moral decay and rejection of God.

God promised the inhabitants of Jerusalem that if they would “diligently hearken” to His commandment concerning the Sabbath, Jerusalem would continue forever and God would bless the kings and inhabitants of Judah. On the other hand, God warned that if the people of Jerusalem refused to hallow the Sabbath and continued to regard it as any other day, God would “kindle a fire” that would destroy their beloved city.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - A. The condemnation of the prophet
 - 7. The seventh sermon: The sign of the unmarried prophet
 - d. The description of Judah’s sin (17:1-11)
 - e. The plea of the prophet for vindication (17:12-18)
 - f. The petition for Sabbath observance (17:19-27)
 - (1) The plea for Sabbath observance (17:19-23)
 - (2) The promise for obedience (17:24-26)
 - (3) The result of disobedience (17:27)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What illustration did Jeremiah use to depict how deeply sin was written on the hearts of the people of Judah?

2. What do you think prompted the people to dishonor the Sabbath?

3. Today’s text contrasts those who obey God and those who do not. What are some blessings we can expect if we obey God?

CONCLUSION

God was there for the people of Judah who trusted Him, and He will help those who trust Him now. His promises have not changed.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.” (Jeremiah 18:6)

God sent Jeremiah to the potter’s house in order to learn a lesson. We can picture what he saw there: a potter, and a lump of clay . . . formless, gritty, ugly. We can also picture the steps the potter took to make a vessel.

The first thing a potter does is to remove impurities from the clay, washing it until every foreign particle is gone. Until the clay is clean, it is useless. Next, the potter kneads, cuts, and slams the clay on his table, working it until the texture is even and the air pockets are gone. If bubbles remain in the clay, the pot will explode when it is fired. Any unyielding bits of clay must also be worked out. These are not stones or bits of grit, but part of the clay itself that has to be softened, for if these are left, they will show up in the final stage and ruin the pot’s appearance.

After the clay has been prepared for shaping, the potter places a mound of it in the middle of his wheel. As the wheel turns, the potter applies constant pressure, dipping his hands in water frequently so that the clay is always kept moist and pliable.

Once the pot is formed, it must then be fired in order to be usable. Under the extreme heat necessary to make the clay hard and durable, some pieces may crack or explode. But others come out of the kiln as useful items of beauty.

God was showing Jeremiah that He had the right to mold His people and other nations. While the potter in Jeremiah’s day was human, God is not. He has the authority and the power to take something that is useless, full of the “grit” of sin and rebellion, and work with it until it becomes a thing of beauty. However, unlike the clay, the people of Judah had a choice in the matter. They could continue in their resistance toward God, or they could turn from their evil and yield to Him in repentance.

That concept is still true today. Every individual has the choice to receive God’s Word or reject it. God is willing to mold the life offered to Him. He starts by removing sin from the heart. Then He begins to work out the imperfections of character. He applies pressure where needed, molding and shaping and refining, with His perfect purpose in mind. If a person resists the influences that God allows to come his way, he will

hinder what God is trying to make of his life. Any failure in the forming of a spiritual vessel lies solely with the clay, for God’s ways are perfect.

Every Christian will face times in his life that are filled with difficulties, hard places, even tragic circumstances. The “fire” of these circumstances is meant to stabilize him, refine his nature, and help him achieve permanence in his Christian character.

Today, have you yielded yourself to the Potter? The end result will be eternally beautiful if you do!

BACKGROUND

This chapter, the first part of the prophet’s eighth sermon, speaks of God’s sovereign means of using nations as He desires. This communication was probably given during the first few years that Jehoiakim reigned.

To portray God’s message, Jeremiah often presented his prophecies by means of common objects or symbolic concepts. In today’s text, God commanded Jeremiah to go to the potter’s house, where the prophet received a message. The crafting of pottery was common in Jeremiah’s time and was accomplished using two stone wheels operated by the potter’s foot, while the potter shaped the vessel with his hands. As Jeremiah watched the potter form what was intended to be an attractive vessel, the object was suddenly flawed, so the potter began again. This illustrated the fact that through rebellion and disobedience, the Israelites had become marred as the clay. God had the sovereign power to remake them, but they had to submit to Him.

God wanted the Jewish people to be pliable and teachable in His Hands, ready to conform to His standards. He has the power and sovereign right to pluck up, pull down, or destroy entirely in order to accomplish His perfect will. He warned the people to listen to His message and change their ways. If they had done so, they would have avoided judgment. But the warning was that if they continued to do evil, they would be punished.

In verse 12, the people rejected Jeremiah’s words. The term “virgin of Israel” emphasized their guilt as the chosen nation of God who had carelessly refused and forgotten His ways. Jeremiah pointed out the absurdity of their actions and attitudes by comparing them to leaving the cold, pure snowmelt of Lebanon (symbolic of God’s pure truth) to settle for something far inferior (worshiping false gods). Even the heathen nations did not do this, and Judah knew God’s instructions. Consequently, their land would

Because of their violent rejection of Jeremiah's words, the people of Judah plotted to portray him as a false prophet, thereby removing any credibility he had with those who heard him. They even conspired to kill him. As a result, in the final verses of the chapter, Jeremiah was at a very low ebb, and asked God to hasten judgment against them.

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- 3.** What events or situations has God used to effect positive changes in you?

Let us keep in mind that God is the Potter, and we are the clay. If we allow Him to have His way in our lives, the resulting vessel He molds will be used in a beautiful way to honor His name.

1. What did the Children of Israel do that was displeasing to the Lord?

- [illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee. And shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter’s vessel, that cannot be made whole again: and they shall bury them in Tophet, till there be no place to bury.” (Jeremiah 19:10-11)

Sometimes people’s lives are so broken by sin that it would seem impossible for them to be repaired. As a youth, George Martin asked his mother, “What happens to a man when he dies?” but she had no answer for him. When George was in the eighth grade, he left home and went to sea. He took on many sinful habits, visited skid rows in large cities around the world, and was in and out of jail for drunkenness. When he was just nineteen years old, he took his first treatment for alcoholism. He tried to get out of that kind of life, but found himself helpless to do so.

In time, his wanderings took him to Eureka, California, where he ended up in jail again. There, at the close of a religious service, he heard a minister say, “You don’t have to be in church to pray. It doesn’t make any difference where you are, the conditions are the same. If you get honest with the Lord, He will hear you. If you don’t, you won’t get anything.” George said, “I liked that. I always liked straight talk.”

Soon George went back to sea. He said, “Even though I was not yet thirty years old, my nerves were shot. Just the click of the gyro as I tried to keep the ship on course during a night watch would almost drive me crazy. I kept a bottle of liquor in my pocket to see me through, and to keep me from jumping overboard. I also had a blood disease I had picked up in South Africa. After being in three marine hospitals for treatment, I was still no better.”

One night, in a flop house on Market Street and Embarcadero in San Francisco, California, George felt he was going to die. He decided to try to find out if there was a God, and if He would hear him. At three o’clock in the morning he prayed, “God, do for me what You did for those people I heard testify in Eureka.” He said, “In the twinkling of an eye, the power of God came down into that hotel room. All Heaven broke loose and God set me free. I didn’t know what it meant to be born again, but the Spirit of the Lord spoke to my heart, ‘Your disease-wracked body is clean. Your sins are forgiven. Go forth and do

right or you will have eternity in condemnation.’ The next day I walked out of that hotel a man free from sin, a new creature in Christ Jesus.” George’s life was dramatically changed, and he served God for many years until he was called home to Heaven.

To many it would have appeared that George Martin’s life was broken beyond repair, like a pottery vessel shattered into hundreds of pieces. But God was able to take what was broken and fix it when George cried out with an honest heart.

In contrast to George’s contrite heart, Judah had determined to forsake God and pursue an evil course. Because of their stubborn disobedience, God told Jeremiah that He would break them “as one breaketh a potter’s vessel, that cannot be made whole again.” How tragic!

Still today, God offers mercy to those who will repent as George Martin did. However, stubborn refusal, like that of Judah, will eventually be punished. How blessed we are if we choose to follow God and obey His will!

BACKGROUND

Today’s text continues Jeremiah’s eighth sermon. Israel was God’s chosen nation. He had revealed Himself to the Israelites to a far more intimate degree than to any other nation then on the earth. Down through their history, He had performed a multitude of mighty miracles on their behalf. In return, He looked for their willing service, but instead, for the most part, He was recompensed with blatant, willful disobedience.

At the time of Jeremiah, the Jewish people were engaged in grossly vile practices. In today’s text, God had Jeremiah take certain priests and high-ranking leaders of Jerusalem out to the “valley of the son of Hinnom.” There the people burned incense to strange gods. During the reign of Manasseh, they had begun the practice of burning their own babies as sacrifices to the false god Molech. This is alluded to in verse 5, “and have filled this place with the blood of innocents.” At the time of his national reform, King Josiah had changed the valley into a garbage dump for the region and named it Tophet, which literally means “fireplace.”

The object lesson that God had Jeremiah use in this chapter was to break an earthen bottle. The original language translated “earthen bottle” indicates a costly and extremely delicate vessel. In contrast to the clay at the potter’s house (chapter 18), which could be kneaded down and reshaped, the breaking of the bottle was irreversible; it was shattered and could never

be fixed. This illustrated that Judah and Jerusalem would be utterly destroyed.

Jeremiah detailed again how the people of Judah had sinned against God and the awfulness of their impending judgment. He predicted that many would die, the city would be so desolate that it would be an object of scorn (hissing), and people would be so starved because of the siege that they would become cannibals (verse 9). This prophecy was fulfilled after Babylon besieged Jerusalem in 588 B.C., completely destroying it eighteen months later in 586 B.C. (see Lamentations 4:10). Again in A.D. 70, Jerusalem was totally devastated by the Romans.

Verse 13 refers to the roofs of the people's houses. In the ancient east, flat roofs were common and were used for many good and rightful activities. However, the people of Judah had used their roofs as places of idol worship.

After breaking the bottle in the valley of Hinnom, Jeremiah went to the Temple and spoke to the people there, warning them of the coming judgment.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - A. The condemnation of the prophet
 - 8. The eighth sermon: The potter and the broken bottle
 - b. The significance of the broken bottle
 - (1) The presentation of the message (19:1-15)
 - (a) The message of doom (19:1-9)
 - (b) The symbol of doom (19:10-13)
 - (c) The message repeated (19:14-15)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Who was Jeremiah told to take as witnesses to the object lesson about the pottery bottle?

2. Why do you think God instructed that these particular representatives of the people should see Jeremiah's object lesson?

3. How should considering the finality of God's judgment affect our lives?

CONCLUSION

God has made it possible for each person to escape judgment, but we must avail ourselves of His remedy and follow His instructions.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the LORD.” (Jeremiah 20:2)

Khmu Christians in northern Laos often face opposition from the Communist government. Periodically, those who will not abandon their faith are forced to leave their villages, and their property is given to someone else. They must re-establish themselves elsewhere, and sometimes they are not allowed to farm until they pay a fee.

One group of fourteen families had to move in 2003. A year after they relocated, the Communists discovered that the head of their new village cared about these Christians and let them construct a bamboo church. The sympathetic village leader was replaced with one who chose to persecute the Christians. The roof of their church was ripped off more than once, yet they would hold three services a week—even when the roof was damaged.¹ They were willing to die for God if necessary, and additional families began choosing to follow the Lord. One evangelist said, “There are so many people wanting to accept Christ, we do not have enough workers to teach them!”²

These people in Laos are choosing to live for God and share Christ no matter what the cost to themselves. Jeremiah also chose to be faithful to God’s call on his life, and he also suffered persecution. Today’s focus verse tells how he was beaten and put in stocks. The situation was difficult enough that Jeremiah purposed not to speak in God’s name any more. However, “his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones” (verse 9) and Jeremiah continued to proclaim God’s message.

Most of us will not face the extreme persecution that Jeremiah or the Christians in Laos have, but we will have an opportunity to choose whether or not we will be fully committed to God. May we ask God to help us have enough love for the Gospel in our hearts that we will stand for Him no matter what the personal cost. The desire to share it will be a “fire in our bones.” Those around us need to hear the message of God’s love.

BACKGROUND

Chapter 20 concludes the eighth sermon, and contains the response to Jeremiah’s message in the previous chapter about the broken vessel. Jeremiah had

given his exhortation to people of high position, both in the valley of Hinnom and then in the Temple, and his words were not well received. This passage contains the first reference in this book to “Jeremiah the prophet,” which shows that people recognized him in that role.

Pashur, who may have been a chief priest, was responsible for Temple security. Verse 2 says Pashur “smote” Jeremiah, which meant he had him beaten, perhaps with thirty-nine or forty stripes, and put him in stocks for the night. Stocks anchored a person’s neck, hands, and feet, and kept the body in a twisted and agonizing position. “The high gate of Benjamin” was a Temple gate—a public place where the people passing by could scoff and jeer at Jeremiah. This is the first mention of Jeremiah’s being physically abused.

When Jeremiah was released, he seized the opportunity to again predict coming judgment. The new name he gave Pashur was Magormissabib, meaning “fear on every side.” Verse 6 implies that Pashur had discounted Jeremiah’s prophecies, probably promising peace. His punishment would be to go into captivity himself and to see it come upon his friends as well. Verse 4 is the first time in the Book of Jeremiah where Babylon is named as the conqueror.

In verses 7-18, a perspective is given that poignantly shows Jeremiah’s pain. He was a sensitive man, and the mockery and ridicule he experienced was difficult for him to endure. The word *deceived* in verse 7 means “persuaded.” The sense of the passage in verses 7-10 is that God had called Jeremiah to prophesy, even though he did not want to. When he faithfully delivered God’s message of “violence and spoil,” he was rejected and in danger of being killed by the people. Consequently, Jeremiah decided to cease prophesying, but God’s Word was like a fire inside of him, so he began again.

In verses 11-13, Jeremiah remembered that God was with him and would work mightily on his behalf. By verse 13 his faith was strong enough to view God’s deliverance as already done.

Verses 14-18 contain a bitter cry (similar to Job’s expression of anguish) revealing Jeremiah’s wish that he had never been born. This passage contrasts so strongly with the preceding verses that some Bible scholars feel they perhaps should have been recorded between verses 8 and 9. Whether or not that is so, they show the extremity of Jeremiah’s feelings. Yet even when he was wishing he had not been born, he did not turn against or doubt God.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - A. The condemnation of the prophet
 - 8. The eighth sermon: The potter and the broken bottle
 - b. The significance of the broken bottle
 - (2) The persecution of the messenger (20:1-18)
 - (a) The punishment of Jeremiah (20:1-2)
 - (b) The judgment upon Pashur (20:3-6)
 - (c) The complaint of Jeremiah (20:7-18)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did Jeremiah say would happen to Pashur?

2. What might have caused the people of Judah to mock Jeremiah?

3. Verse 13 says, "Sing unto the LORD, praise ye the LORD." This is not always easy to do during a difficult trial. How does praising the Lord benefit us?

CONCLUSION

Do we have the zeal and purpose to take a stand for God, even if it means facing persecution?

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath.” (Jeremiah 21:5)

In November 1994, voters in the State of Oregon passed Ballot Measure 11, which requires mandatory sentencing for those convicted of specific crimes. This means there will be no leniency because of a previously good record, and there will be no reduction of sentence or parole because of good behavior while incarcerated. Measure 11 states that the penalty for a conviction cannot be negotiated down. Youths age fifteen and older who are charged with the listed crimes have to be tried as adults. The hope was that more stringent penalties will be a stronger deterrent. While the measure has since been tested in court and no doubt will be again, only under “rare circumstances” can lesser sentences be imposed. The law makes the sentence compulsory.

In today’s focus verse, Zedekiah was facing God’s “mandatory sentencing.” The king asked God for deliverance from King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, but God answered with an emphatic refusal. Zedekiah was desperate and would have liked to negotiate to obtain God’s help, but he had ignored Jeremiah’s instructions to make peace with King Nebuchadnezzar and had relied instead on an alliance with Egypt. As a result, Zedekiah and the nation of Judah were going to receive the terrible judgment of God: Jerusalem would fall to the Babylonians, and only those who surrendered immediately would be spared.

We know that God extends incredible love and mercy. However, if His provisions are persistently refused, His justice demands judgment. As we come to God for direction or ask for His favor and intervention in our lives, we need to be ready to respond obediently to His instructions. We never want God to refuse us because we have been disobedient or have insisted on having our own way. Like King Zedekiah discovered, fighting against God is a losing battle.

In spite of God’s resounding refusal to save Jerusalem, He did offer guidance through Jeremiah to any of the people who would heed. They were instructed to submit themselves to the Chaldeans, and thus, ultimately, to God. Today also, fully yielding to God is the route to receiving His help. How privileged we are to be able to come willingly and ask Him to direct our lives, and how blessed we are if we do this!

BACKGROUND

Chapter 21 is an abrupt change from the previous chapters. It begins the ninth sermon with a message against Zedekiah. The king sent his counselors to Jeremiah requesting help from the Lord because of the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. However, Jeremiah said that surrender was the only hope.

It is thought that the prophecies of the next several chapters are not in chronological order. The events of chapter 21 transpired during the ninth year of King Zedekiah’s eleven-year reign. The final siege of Jerusalem lasted eighteen months, and the Babylonian armies were coming against Judah.

The regard for Jeremiah shown in this chapter is a stark contrast to the attitudes demonstrated in the prior chapter. Here he was considered a prophet who gave worthy advice. The king sent two of his officials to ask Jeremiah to inquire of the Lord. The Pashur mentioned in this chapter is the son of Melchiah, so he is a different person than the Pashur in chapter 20, who was the son of Immer. The phrase “if so be that the LORD will deal with us according to all his wondrous works” suggests that Zedekiah hoped for a promise of deliverance like Isaiah had given Hezekiah one hundred years earlier. “That he may go up from us” meant Zedekiah hoped the siege would be lifted. However, God’s answer was clear: He would fight with Babylon against Judah.

Beginning in verse 8, God gave the people a choice: “the way of life” or “the way of death.” To stay in Jerusalem meant death by the sword, famine, or pestilence. To live, they must go out and surrender to the enemy. Jeremiah was not being a traitor by giving this counsel. He knew judgment was sure, and the only hope was for the people to cease resisting.

The fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem is recorded in 2 Kings 25:1-11. The city was besieged, famine weakened the inhabitants, the warriors fled and were captured, Zedekiah was taken captive and executed, and the Temple, the palace, and all the houses of the nobles were destroyed by fire. Zedekiah was the last king to reign over Judah before their exile into Babylon.

Beginning with verse 10, the variation in chronology seems to appear again, because the final verses of the chapter could be directed to more kings than just Zedekiah. God wanted them to rule justly. Some scholars believe that “who shall come down against us? Or who shall enter into our habitations?” referred to the excellent fortifications of the city of Jerusalem.

These may have been the object of the people’s trust, but their hope was in vain. God said, “I will kindle a fire in the forest thereof,” which may have referred to the houses of Jerusalem, many of which were built with cedar and were close together.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - A. The condemnation of the prophet
 - 9. The ninth sermon: Against Judah’s kings
 - a. The message against Zedekiah
 - (1) The request of Zedekiah (21:1-2)
 - (2) The reply of Jeremiah (21:3-14)
 - (a) To the king (21:3-7)
 - (b) To the people (21:8-10)
 - (c) To the royal house (21:11-14)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What terrible consequences did Jeremiah prophesy would occur if Zedekiah and the people fought against the Babylonians?

2. What choice did God give to the people of Judah? Why do you think He made this choice so clear to them?

3. What should be the attitude of our hearts when we call on God in a time of need?

CONCLUSION

Quick compliance to God brings His mercy; persistent refusal to heed His Word brings His justice.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Thus saith the LORD; Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place. For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people.” (Jeremiah 22:3-4)

In January of 1943, Doctor Adelaide Hautval, the daughter of a French Protestant pastor, was sent to Auschwitz. Her crime? After being arrested for crossing into the unoccupied zone in France in order to attend her mother’s funeral, she had vehemently protested the inhumane treatment of Jewish prisoners. She told the guards, “They are human beings just like us.” The guard responded that from then on, she would be treated like a Jew. She was forced to wear a yellow patch identifying her as a “Friend of the Jews,” and was transferred to Auschwitz, the largest of Nazi Germany’s concentration and extermination camps.

Because of her medical background, Hautval was assigned to the notorious Block 10, where Nazi medical teams performed pseudo-medical experiments on Jewish women. In spite of potential retribution, she courageously refused to participate in these experiments, and instead quietly did whatever she could to help the condemned women. Known to the women prisoners as the “angel in white,” she hid sick women on the upper bunks, did not report epidemics that occurred in the prison barracks, and offered the Jewish women every possible kindness.

In April of 1945, Hautval was liberated by Allied troops, and subsequently testified at the trials of several German doctors. At the close of one of those trials, the judge called Hautval “one of the most impressive and courageous women who have ever given evidence in the courts of this country.”

What an example of one who fulfilled the admonition given in our focus verses! Adelaide Hautval did her best to “deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor.” She refused, at the peril of her own life, to do violence to the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. And eventually she was honored for her stand: in 1965 she was given the “Righteous Among the Nations” award from the government of Israel.

In today’s focus verses, Jeremiah enjoined King Jehoiakim and two others of the ruling family to

practice righteousness and justice. They were assured that if they would turn from evil and do right, the kingdom of Judah would flourish. However, the prophet also declared that if they continued in rebellion, they would be utterly destroyed.

The principle outlined in these verses is still applicable in our day. Those who choose to do right and live in obedience to God will enjoy His blessing. Although this may not always be evidenced by material prosperity or temporal benefits in this life, it will certainly bring a rich reward in eternity. Conversely, those who refuse to do right, if they continue in that way, will suffer eternal consequences for their rebellion against God.

Today, let us purpose to be among those who do right, and live in obedience to God. We will never be sorry if we make that choice!

BACKGROUND

Chapter 22 continues the ninth sermon and begins a series of oracles, including some that Bible scholars believe were given by Jeremiah during the reigns of kings prior to Zedekiah. These messages reinforce the fact that Judah and her kings had been thoroughly warned of the judgment that was going to come upon the nation.

Verses 1-9 contain a message to the royal house, which introduces the other warnings. The responsibilities of the kings were noted and the rewards for fulfilling them mentioned. However, if the kings refused to follow God’s commands, their land would be made desolate. “Gilead” and “the head of Lebanon” may have referred to the royal palace which was built of oak and cedar. It may also have referred to the countryside of Judah—Gilead was the most fertile area; Lebanon was the highest mountain—but neither the kings nor the natural resources would be sufficient to stop God’s judgment.

Verses 10-12 are an oracle about Shallum, who was also called Jehoahaz. This was Josiah’s son who became king when Josiah was killed at Megiddo. After reigning three months, Shallum was taken to Egypt by Pharaoh-necho. The people of Judah were still mourning for Josiah, but God told them to mourn for Shallum because he would never return to Judah. He was the first of Judah’s kings to die in exile.

The next oracle, verses 13-23, was to Jehoiakim, who was also called Eliakim. Another of Josiah’s sons, he was an ungodly king and unscrupulous ruler. He built a lavish palace by making the people work without receiving pay, and he oppressed them. God



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.” (Jeremiah 23:5)

Throughout the history of mankind, power and corruption have often gone hand in hand. In 1788, James Madison wrote, “But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary.” Madison wrote these words in an article trying to convince people to adopt the then new United States Constitution and Bill of Rights. The Constitution was to have a series of “checks and balances” to prevent the national government or any person in it from becoming too powerful. Madison believed that unrestrained power could lead to corruption.

In Jeremiah’s time, the leaders of Judah were corrupt. In today’s text, Jeremiah pronounced the judgment of God against King Jeconiah as well as the evil priests and prophets. They had let the power they were given corrupt their thoughts, believing that they could do whatever they pleased and still have God’s help when they desired.

These people had the instructions from Moses and the Law, as well as good examples from previous leaders who had believed and trusted God, such as David, Hezekiah, and others. They also had inspiration and guidance from prophets such as Samuel, Amos, Joel, Isaiah, and finally Jeremiah. Tragically, they chose to ignore all those good examples and God-given instruction. As a result, the terrible judgments Jeremiah foretold came to pass, and King Jeconiah and the other ungodly leaders were exiled to Babylon when the Chaldeans captured and eventually destroyed Jerusalem.

However, as shown in the focus verse, Jeremiah also revealed that someday a truly righteous King would come to gather His people and protect and provide for them. When He rules the earth, He will rise above any corruption in spite of His infinite power. This One will be a descendant of King David; His reign will be characterized by justice. He will gather the Jews from all countries and provide for and protect them. This gathering will be more remarkable than the Israelites being led from slavery in Egypt and brought into the Promised Land.

Today, we have the privilege of living in the Kingdom of this Divine Ruler. Although this prophecy of Jeremiah’s has not yet been physically fulfilled in the world, there is a spiritual kingdom where Jesus reigns. By asking God to forgive us of our sins and truly turning away from them, we can be born again. Then He will protect and provide for us. He will reign over our hearts in righteousness.

BACKGROUND

Concluding the ninth sermon, the final verses of chapter 22 are messages about Jehoiachin, and the first part of chapter 23 was addressed to the rulers of Judah. Chapter 24 also gives a Messianic prophesy which extended hope for the future.

Jehoiachin (also called Coniah and Jeconiah) became king after his father Jehoiakim. A king’s signet ring (verse 24) was his symbol of authority and was used to stamp official documents. God was saying that although Jehoiachin had been valuable to Him, the king would be removed from reigning. After ruling only three months, Jehoiachin surrendered to the Chaldeans. He, his family (including his mother), and ten thousand others were exiled to Babylon, where he died.

Verse 28 may be the cry of the Jewish people regarding Jehoiachin, but God said, “Write ye this man childless” (verse 30), meaning that none of his descendants would reign in Judah. Nebuchadnezzar made Zedekiah (Josiah’s son and Jehoiachin’s uncle) the king, but Jehoiachin outlived Zedekiah. Thus, upon Jehoiachin’s death, there was no longer a king of the line of David.

Jeremiah 23:1-8 is another message to the rulers of Judah. The pastors—kings, political and religious leaders, and false prophets—had led the people away from God, and judgment was coming. However, Jeremiah also gave a prophecy of hope. A remnant of the Jewish people would be gathered again to their own land. This prophecy was first fulfilled when the exiles returned from Babylon after seventy years. The complete fulfillment of this passage will transpire during the Millennium.

The prophet said one day there would be another king in David’s line, “a righteous Branch,” which looked ahead to the time of Christ. The word *branch* could be translated “sprout” or “shoot,” such as comes from the root of a tree after it has been cut down. Jesus fulfilled this prophecy because his mother, Mary, was in the lineage of David through his son Nathan (rather than through Solomon, as the kings

were). Jesus’ earthly father, Joseph, was in the lineage of Jehoiachin, tying him to the Davidic dynasty, but not contradicting Jeremiah’s prophecy regarding Jehoiachin. When Jesus comes back to reign on the earth for a thousand years, the prophecies of this passage will be fully realized.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - A. The condemnation of the prophet
 - 9. The ninth sermon: Against Judah’s kings
 - d. The message against Jehoiachin (22:24-30)
 - e. The future restoration by a righteous King (23:1-8)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Into whose hand did God declare that He would give King Coniah (Jeconiah)?

2. Why do you think God allowed Judah’s spiritual leaders to guide the people unfaithfully?

3. What are some of the benefits of being in Christ’s spiritual kingdom?

CONCLUSION

We want to be a part of the Lord’s spiritual kingdom today and have Him as the King of our lives. He is the Leader we can trust in completely.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?”
(Jeremiah 23:29)**

God’s Word is powerful enough to impact the most hardened of hearts. A member of the Portland Apostolic Faith Church, Don Morse, often testified about how this was proved true in his life. Don’s mother died when he was young, and while still a boy, he ran away from home and became a drifter. Many times he slept in boxcars, covering himself with cardboard to stay warm. Bad habits attached themselves to his life, and he began smoking four or five packs of cigarettes a day, and gambling all night until his money ran out. Bitterness, blasphemy, and hatred filled his heart, and he even contemplated suicide.

While sailing around the world as a merchant mariner, Don’s ship came into Portland, Oregon, and he was invited to a church service. Sitting in that meeting, tears began to flow down his cheeks. “Many times I had wished that I could cry,” he related. “One time when leaving home in Minnesota, I went out to the barnyard, lit a cigarette, and blew the smoke into my eyes to make it look like I had tears. Then I quickly went to the house to let them see my red eyes. But when God’s Spirit brought tears to my eyes that night in church, they were real ones.

“Though I did not pray through to salvation that night, when I went back to my ship, I started reading the Bible. I couldn’t understand everything I read, but what I did understand touched my heart. The words in the Bible were like a magnet; they drew me. One day I was reading my Bible in the mess hall. Some of the crew said, ‘Throw that thing in the furnace. It won’t do you any good.’ Another said, ‘You had better see a psychiatrist. You need help!’ But I ignored them and kept reading.”

The Word of God began to have an effect. Don’s ship had gone back out to sea, but when it returned to Portland, his one desire was to get back to church and pray again at the altar benches there. On his knees, he sought God in earnest, and God miraculously transformed his life. For more than fifty years, until his death in 2009, he treasured the Word of God that brought deliverance to his sin-hardened heart, and took every opportunity to share his testimony with others.

Our focus verse brings out the power and force of God’s Word by comparing it to fire and a hammer.

Like a fire, it can purge impurities, and like a hammer it can break down the stoniest heart.

Don Morse was one who yielded to the power of God’s Word, allowing it to impact his heart and bring him to a place of repentance. What effect has the Word of God had upon your heart? If you have yielded to it, rejoice in that and, like Don, purpose to share it with others. If you have not yielded, do so now!

BACKGROUND

Today’s text is the tenth sermon by the Prophet Jeremiah, and was directed to the prophets and priests. Judah’s false prophets had resisted Jeremiah’s prophecies as he declared the word of the Lord, and in these verses he strongly condemned them.

Jeremiah was horrified at the disregard the religious leaders and the people had for God and for the judgment that would be the consequence of their rebellion, and described his reaction by saying, “All my bones shake.” They had brought idol worship into the Temple itself: “In my house have I found their wickedness” (verse 11). They had seen the demise of the Northern Kingdom, who “prophesied in Baal” (verse 13). Yet, rather than learning from Israel’s example, the religious leaders of Judah had done worse. In Jerusalem they had the Temple, where the pure worship of God was to take place, but they had claimed to worship Him while they committed vile sins. As a result, they would face disaster and death. The “water of gall” (verse 15) means water that is poisoned.

The errors of the prophets were detailed in verses 16-22. Their prophecies were from “their own heart” and not from God. They gave messages that the people liked, telling them their sinful ways were all right. The prophets had not spent time in God’s presence or they would have known to warn the people of His judgments.

In verses 23-32, God expressed His disgust with these religious people. They acted as though He could not see their actions, when He is omnipresent. Dreams were one of the ways God revealed Himself in Old Testament times, but the dreams of these prophets were not from God. False dreams were compared to chaff, which is worthless, while God’s revelations were equated to wheat. In contrast to the untrue statements, God’s Word has power, like a fire or a hammer breaking a rock.

The final passage of today’s text, verses 33-40, is about “the burden of the LORD.” In Jeremiah’s time, this phrase was used to mean a message that God had sent to the people, which was both a weight to Him

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

A CLOSER LOOK

2. Why do you think prophets of Jeremiah's day falsely promised peace, declaring no evil would befall Judah?

CONCLUSION

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good.” (Jeremiah 24:5)

“Go and play somewhere else,” my dad firmly told us young children as he prepared to do a weld on some heavy machinery in his shop. “The arc from the welder will burn your eyes.” We probably didn’t fully understand the danger to our eyes, but we were not slow in leaving the shop. Dad never wasted words: if he told us to get moving, we knew it was necessary for our own good, not merely to get us out from under his feet.

All of the kids in the homes around the farm were curious about what happened in Dad’s shop. A large building that housed his work trucks, it was filled with all kinds of interesting tools and machinery. If we had a problem with a toy, bicycle, or household item, we took it out to Dad’s shop, and he would find a way to repair it. However, if a situation was potentially dangerous, we were not left in doubt as to whether we should be around. Dad loved his children, and he had our safety at heart. He never hesitated to let us know when it was time for us to stay out of the way.

In today’s text, the basket of “good figs” represented the people of Judah who had been carried away captive into Babylon. Although they did not choose to be exiled in a strange land, God said that submitting to what He had ordained would ultimately be for their good. Though many years would elapse, He promised to preserve the exiles and eventually bring them again into their own land.

From time to time in our Christian walks, we awaken to the understanding that we have been preserved or shielded from danger in a way that is miraculous. We suddenly *know* that God has taken control of a situation and kept us from grave physical injury or spiritual defeat. Other times we are providentially absent from a bad situation by God’s great design. Our loving Heavenly Father has worked for our protection.

At other times, we will face challenges—physically, emotionally, financially, or in some other way. We may not understand why these challenges have come along. However, in these times too, we can look to our Heavenly Father and remind ourselves that He has only our good in mind.

God holds the reins of our lives, and we can be certain that He will take care of all the details. Unlike rebellious Judah, He has helped us to know Him, and to understand that we are His people. We can rest in the assurance that He is a good God, and that everything that comes our way will ultimately be for our good as we continue to trust in Him and obey His instructions.

BACKGROUND

Chapter 24, Jeremiah’s eleventh sermon or discourse, is based upon the prophet’s vision of two baskets of figs. Jeremiah had previously declared that those who submitted to Nebuchadnezzar and captivity would do so to their own benefit, while those who resisted and remained in Jerusalem would do so to their own peril. The good figs seen by Jeremiah represented the Jews who were captives in Babylon, while the bad figs symbolized those who had stayed in Judah and had neglected to worship God.

When these Scriptures were given, Jeremiah had been prophesying to a largely non-responsive audience for more than twenty years. In 597 B.C., King Nebuchadnezzar’s armies had invaded Judah and taken captive King Jehoiachin (also called Jeconiah and Coniah), many of the nobles, and those proficient in trades that would be beneficial to building up the Babylonian Empire.

Through Jeremiah, God told those captive in Babylon that His design for them was for their ultimate good, even though they had to experience some disciplinary action before they would receive the benefit. In this chapter, Jeremiah let the captives know that God sent them to Babylon to preserve them, and those who remained in Judah would suffer for their spiritual adultery with the heathen nations around them. They would be scattered, and some of their families would be scorned and cursed among the populations where they settled. Eventually, none of them would inhabit the land of their inheritance.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - A. The condemnation of the prophet
 - 11. The eleventh sermon: The two baskets of figs (24:1-10)
 - a. The vision (24:1-3)
 - b. The interpretation (24:4-10)
 - (1) The good figs (24:4-7)
 - (2) The bad figs (24:8-10)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How did Jeremiah describe the two baskets of figs that he saw?

2. Why do you think God chose to preserve His chosen people in Babylon rather than preserve them at home in Jerusalem?

[illegible]

3. Describe a time when you saw, after the fact, God's way of accomplishing His purpose for you.

CONCLUSION

Although we may not always understand the circumstances that come our way, if our trust is in the Lord, we can be assured that He has our best interests at heart and is working for our good.

NOTES

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“The which Jeremiah the prophet spake unto all the people of Judah, and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day, that is the three and twentieth year, the word of the LORD hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened.” (Jeremiah 25:2-3)

When Hidehiro Ouchi was twenty years old and a student in college, a friend invited him to a church in Tokyo to learn English. There, missionaries helped him understand there was something more important than learning a new language; it was the salvation of his soul. He said, “I did not know anything about my heart’s condition or any purpose for my life. As I listened to the preaching, I found out that I was a sinner before God. When I repented of my sins, asking God to forgive me, He changed my heart and forgave me. He gave me peace and joy and showed me the purpose of my life. For fifty years, God has been so good and merciful to me.”

In 1962, God called Brother Ouchi to be the pastor of the Apostolic Faith Church in Kawasaki. The greater metropolitan area of Tokyo, Kawasaki, and Yokohama, Japan, had a population that grew to exceed twelve million. Less than two percent of those people claimed any form of Christianity. Yet, Brother Ouchi and the Japanese believers joyfully continued lifting up the Name of Jesus. He would say, “We have a very small group in Japan, but God encourages us.” This was proved out by Brother Ouchi’s big smile and his faithfulness to continue preaching the Gospel until his passing in 2022.

The Prophet Jeremiah showed perseverance in fulfilling God’s call on his life while facing much greater disregard for God. In today’s text, Jeremiah said he had been speaking God’s word to the people of Judah for ten years. He preached for about forty years, giving essentially the same message. “If you will turn to the Lord in full repentance, the Lord will bless you individually and as a nation. If, however, you continue in your sins, then judgment will come.” If Jeremiah had seen a positive response, that might have made his hard work seem more worthwhile. However, he could only conclude with the words of our focus verse, “. . . but ye have not hearkened.” Even though he faced extremely discouraging situations, Jeremiah did not quit. He did not dilute his message. He did not stop trying to reach the people.

Jeremiah had set out to do the Lord’s will, and he was not swayed, regardless of Judah’s poor response.

As Christians, we have started out to serve the Lord. Perhaps we gave our lives to Him just a few days ago, or maybe it has been many years since that wonderful moment. Whether our days are hard or easy (or most likely, some of both), like Jeremiah and also Brother Ouchi, we need to keep pressing on. We need to be faithful, not only for the sake of our own souls, but also for the souls of others. Some have held on in faith and prayer for many years for the salvation of loved ones, and as a result, souls were gloriously saved. Some have stood through hard trials and persecution with the goal of giving glory to God. Let us purpose to stand true to the Lord, come what may, and seek to have the tenacity to keep on keeping on.

BACKGROUND

The twelfth sermon, given at the midpoint of Jeremiah’s career, warns of an invasion by Babylon and the exile of the people of Judah, and speaks of the eventual judgment of Babylon and the other nations.

Chapter 25 goes back in time to the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim. In 605 B.C., Babylon conquered Carchemish, a major city in western Assyria. Judah had been aligned with Egypt, who tried to help defend Assyria. However, Babylon prevailed over Egypt and invaded Judah, taking captives. Consequently Judah was forced to come under Babylon’s control. Because God had ordained this, Jeremiah actively endeavored to persuade Jehoiakim to submit to Babylon’s rule.

In verses 1-7, Jeremiah rehearsed God’s love for the people of Judah. Over many years God had sent prophet after prophet—including Jeremiah himself—to urge the people to turn from their evil ways. Specifically, God warned them to stop worshiping idols and to turn from the evil “works of their hands.” If they would stop their sinful practices (which, He noted, were to their own hurt) and worship the true and living God, He would be pleased to bless them. God had even told the people of Judah that if they did this, they could dwell in their own land forever. Unfortunately the people did not turn to the Lord.

Because the people failed to heed the warnings given them, God said He would turn Judah over to the ungodly Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (verses 8-11). Their cities would be ravished, their Temple plundered and destroyed, and many people killed. Others would be taken from their homeland into captivity many miles away. Even in the face of this

somber judgment, however, there was a ray of hope. The captivity would be for a limited time: seventy years. At the end of that time, Babylon would be punished, and God promised to allow the Jewish people to begin to rebuild (verses 12-14).

Verses 15-29 describe the judgment of the various nations surrounding Judah. The fact that God would permit the armies of Nebuchadnezzar to triumph over Judah did not mean that the Babylonians were more righteous than the Jewish people. Judah was being punished because the people had rejected God. Ultimately, however, the other nations would “take the wine cup” of God’s fury because of their wickedness, and finally, Babylon (called Sheshack in verse 26) would drink also.

Verses 30-38 were written in poetry, giving a further depiction of judgment. While describing in part the events that would come upon Judah and the nations of that time, this passage also looks ahead to the judgment that will come upon the whole world in the last days.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - A. The condemnation of the prophet
 - 12. The twelfth sermon: The seventy years of captivity (25:1-38)
 - a. The disobedience of Judah (25:1-7)
 - b. The destruction of Judah (25:8-11)
 - c. The destruction of Babylon (25:12-14)
 - d. The destruction of the nations (25:15-29)
 - e. The description of the judgment (25:30-38)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did Jeremiah say God would take away from the people of Judah?

2. What does the phrase “rising early,” as used in this chapter, imply?

3. What are some ways you can encourage yourself to continue steadfastly in your Christian walk?

CONCLUSION

It will be well worth any effort to be faithful in fulfilling God’s call for us. We can be encouraged by others who have persevered.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Nevertheless the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death.” (Jeremiah 26:24)

In 1841, Richard Jackson, a Quaker, was convicted of a murder he did not commit. He was put in jail, and the day came when the warden told Jackson that the next Friday would be his execution day. The warden also told Jackson a carriage would be sent to take him the fifty miles to Philadelphia, the place of his execution. Jackson told the warden that he would like to walk to Philadelphia, giving his word of honor that he would be there in time for his hanging.

Jackson had felt led by God to make this unusual request after much prayer, and he believed God would deliver him. The warden trusted Jackson and, amazingly, let him begin his walk that night. While walking, Jackson came upon two men robbing a man and trying to kill him for his money. Taking his stout walking stick, Jackson beat off the assailants and saved the man's life. The grateful man, who was also headed to Philadelphia, invited Jackson to ride with him but Jackson refused.

On Friday, Jackson arrived at the scaffold where a crowd had already gathered to witness the execution. Jackson walked over to the hangman (who often in that era were convicted murderers) and quietly said, “Sir, I am here to be executed.” The hangman looked at Jackson, recognized him, and then protested, “I cannot hang you, for you saved my life back on the road.” Jackson responded, “Yes, but you must do your duty as the law requires.” The hangman turned to the assembled crowd and cried loudly for all to hear, “This man saved my life and I am to hang him, but I cannot. I must confess that I killed the man of whose murder this person is accused.” Jackson's life was spared because he did what he felt God had showed him to do.¹

In today's text, Jeremiah had followed what God had shown him to do, telling the people of Judah to repent of their evil ways or their Temple would be destroyed. The false prophets and priests had him arrested and demanded his death, accusing him of blasphemy against God. However, God was with Jeremiah as He was with Mr. Jackson, and He preserved both men from death.

Today, too, there will be times when those who do right and take a stand for the truth will be falsely

accused and persecuted. Such treatment is not easy to bear, and all the faithful are not spared. Still, we know that God sees every soul, and He will work out His perfect will in the life of each person who is yielded to Him.

BACKGROUND

Chapters 26-29 record events in the life of Jeremiah and are not in chronological order. In today's text, at God's instruction, Jeremiah went to the Temple and proclaimed the need for the people to repent or face certain disaster in their city and nation. Arrested by the false prophets and priests, Jeremiah's life was threatened, but then he was rescued by the rulers.

This exhortation was given at the beginning of Jehoiakim's eleven-year reign (608-597 B.C.), and the political situation was quite turbulent. Babylon was fighting to conquer Assyria, and Egypt was a significant power. The people of Judah had recently lost King Josiah in battle. After only three months, Josiah's ruling son, Jehoahaz, was dethroned by Pharaoh-necho of Egypt, who made Jehoiakim king. Jehoiakim was an evil king, and the revival of Josiah's time was over.

In light of all this, Jeremiah knew the message from God was vital, and furthermore, God admonished him to give it without omission (“diminish not a word”). He was told to proclaim this call to repentance and warning of judgment in the court of the Temple, probably during a nationwide event when people from throughout the land were present.

The reaction of the priests and false prophets was immediate. Furiously angry, for they did not want to be discredited, they moved the people to say, “Thou shalt surely die.” The “princes of Judah” in verse 10 were the king's counselors and officials who hastily intervened and then listened to Jeremiah's message. He stated that he had been sent by God and warned them to “amend your ways.” They acquitted him, influenced in part by Ahikam the son of Shaphan (verse 24). Some of the elders reminded the people of Micah's words, given about one hundred years earlier; verse 18 is a quote of Micah 3:12.

Verses 20-23 tell of the Prophet Urijah, who is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible. Kirjath-jearim was a city about nine miles from Jerusalem going west toward Jaffa. Some Bible scholars believe Elnathan was the father-in-law of King Jehoiakim. The account of the fate of Urijah illustrates the jeopardy that Jeremiah faced.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - B. The conflicts of the prophet
 - 1. The conflict with his enemies (26:1-24)
 - a. The message of Jerusalem's destruction (26:1-6)
 - b. The arrest of Jeremiah (26:7-9)
 - c. The defense by Jeremiah (26:10-15)
 - d. The release of Jeremiah (26:16-19)
 - e. The death of Urijah (26:20-24)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What message did Jeremiah give to the people who were coming to the Temple to worship?

2. Why do you think the Prophet Urijah was killed and the Prophet Jeremiah spared death?

3. What steps should we take if we find ourselves in a position of being falsely accused?

CONCLUSION

If we faithfully obey the Lord and look to Him for protection and guidance, He will be with us in our times of great need.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon.” (Jeremiah 27:9)

We live in a day when seemingly everything is advertised. Marketers use a combination of manipulation and persuasiveness to promote their products. Their technique may be to suggest that using this product will put the user ahead of the times, or will make him or her part of an elite group with a glamorous lifestyle. The advertisement might present statistics to prove the superiority of the product, or describe some ingredient that makes it exceptionally effective. Words and images with positive connotations may be employed to suggest that its positive qualities would be associated with the consumer.

One soft drink ad that caught my attention featured the beverage being poured into a clear glass. Just the sound of it gurgling from the bottle made me think, Wow, I sure could use a glass of that right now! The visual image of the bubbling drink, complete with bobbing ice cubes and beads of condensation on the glass, actually made me thirsty! The manufacturer was appealing to my senses, enticing me to sample this drink for myself. In this case, what the manufacturer did not advertise were the negative aspects of the product. Studies have proved that there can be potentially harmful side effects tied to the consumption of soft drinks, including tooth decay, weight gain, and diabetes. While the ad led consumers to believe that the product is good for us, the reverse in fact is true. Some ads no doubt tell the truth about their products. However, it is possible for us to be enticed by persuasive advertising into trying something that harms us.

In today's text, Jeremiah found himself combating some false advertising. The ungodly priests and prophets of his day were presenting a spurious message of peace to the people. By contrast, Jeremiah was trying to “sell” a message to the people that God had given him, telling them what they needed to do in order to survive. Sadly, his message of truth was rejected, for the people were more inclined to listen to the false prophets than to Jeremiah's painful but corrective words.

In our day, the danger of being confused by “false advertising” in the spiritual realm still exists. We must carefully guard against being deceived by eloquent

and interesting speakers. False teachers of our day can obscure doctrine, minimize the importance of careful adherence to holy living, and lead us away from the truth of God's Word. May God help us not to be led astray! How important it is to discern what the truth really is and then to stand for it with our whole hearts.

BACKGROUND

In today's text, Jeremiah prophesied of Babylon's control of Judah and the surrounding nations. Bible scholars agree that the events of this chapter took place during the reign of Zedekiah (see verses 3 and 12), which began in 597 B.C.

God instructed Jeremiah to make bonds and yokes—devices placed upon the neck of an ox or other beasts of burden to bring them under control—and to put them upon his neck. This was to be a visual illustration of the submission that God was requiring. Nations that did not obey this message from God would be severely punished.

Prophets, enchanters, and dreamers of Judah were contradicting the message Jeremiah delivered, telling the people exactly what they wanted to hear. This group encouraged King Zedekiah to band together with the surrounding nations and rebel against Babylon. Jeremiah, through the physical yoke about his neck, was telling the people, the king, and the false prophets to listen to God's plan.

God stated in verse 11 that those who listened to Him and followed Jeremiah's instructions would be able to remain in their homes and still use their own land to sustain them, even though in bondage. God gave them this promise, but there were conditions: they must obey Jeremiah's message.

Verse 16 refers to the Temple treasures which the Babylonians had taken during their invasion in 597 B.C. The false prophets claimed these would soon be returned. Jeremiah said this was untrue, that even more precious items would be taken from the Temple.

In verse 17, Jeremiah told the people to submit to God's will and live. Babylon's yoke of bondage, which God permitted, was a much better choice than to have Jerusalem laid waste.

The final verse states God's promise that restoration would take place in His time, not the people's time. These prophecies were fulfilled under Cyrus the Persian after Judah had been in captivity for seventy years.

In this chapter, God gave the people of Judah a clear message: they were to come under the yoke of Babylon. Some would remain in their hometowns,

while others would be carried to Babylon. But the depth of destruction to the nation would depend upon the people's obedience to Jeremiah's message from the Lord.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - B. The conflicts of the prophet
 - 2. The conflict with false prophets (27:1-22)
 - a. The message to foreign rulers (27:1-11)
 - b. The message to Zedekiah (27:12-15)
 - c. The message to the priests and people (27:16-22)

A CLOSER LOOK

- 1. What punishment did God say would come upon the people if they did not submit to the Babylonian nation?**

- 2.** Why do you think God had Jeremiah present a visual object lesson to accompany his message?

- ### 3. What can we do to avoid modern-day false prophets and their enticing messages?

CONCLUSION

It is possible to be influenced by eloquent speakers who offer messages that do not align with the Bible. Let's be sure our hearts are tuned to the truth, so that we do not accept a carefully crafted but false interpretation of God's Word.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. (Jeremiah 28:15)

An old cliché states, “What you don’t know won’t hurt you.” While this may be true in some trivial matters, it certainly is not the case in matters of importance. Although it may be more pleasant or convenient to go through life thinking that everything is OK, it is only when we know the truth—however unpleasant—that we will be motivated to do something about it.

To illustrate, I recall one Saturday a number of years ago when my teenage son and I prepared to repaint our downstairs bathroom, anticipating that the project would take no more than a couple of hours. As we began the prep work, I scraped off a large paint blister and was unhappily surprised to notice that the sheetrock under the blister was damp. As I removed a little of the sheetrock, and then still more, I learned the horrible truth. Not only was much of the sheetrock ruined, but the structural two-by-fours underneath were also rotten. What had once been solid pieces of lumber had become more like soggy bark dust. Our nice, ceramic-tile shower stall apparently had been leaking for a long, long time. By the end of that day, what had once been a shower stall was torn out. What had started out as a two-hour project ended up taking more than two months and around two thousand dollars to complete.

That “Saturday” project is now far enough in the past that we can smile about it, though it was a bit discouraging at the time. I still remember the good feeling we had at the end of those two months when the dry rot had been removed and the bathroom rebuilt with good, solid material. Learning the truth about the condition of our bathroom had been the starting point for repairing the damage.

In today’s text, Hananiah gave a prophecy that brought the people peace of mind and a sense of comfort and security. However, the prophecy was not true—and in our focus verse, Jeremiah rebuked Hananiah for making the people to trust in a lie. The fact was that judgment was definitely coming. Who knows what might have happened if the people had acted upon Jeremiah’s report and had turned to God in sincere repentance? Believing the truth could have been a new starting point in Judah’s relationship with

God. Sadly, they did not accept Jeremiah’s words, but trusted in Hananiah’s lie and continued in their disobedience and rebellion.

Today, we must be careful to reject spiritual counsel that does not align completely with God’s Word. As in the time of Jeremiah, there are “Hananiahs” in the religious world today who lead people astray. Some may teach their hearers to accept Christ without giving any instruction about the necessity for repentance and turning from sin. They may say that a person can never expect to live a life without sin, or that one cannot know for sure that he is ready for eternity until he steps out of this life. While such teachings may seem comforting or convenient for the hearers, they are not according to the Word of God, and will bring eternal consequences.

We must be grounded in the truth in order to avoid being confused or misguided in spiritual matters. Let us purpose to seek for the truth, cherish it, and uphold it in our own lives!

BACKGROUND

Today’s text recounts a specific incident related to the wooden yoke and the false prophets mentioned in the previous chapter. Hananiah was one of those false prophets.

Because of Judah’s continued sin against God, He was going to allow the nation to be put in subjection to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. The country had already been invaded twice by the Chaldean armies (605 and 597 B.C.), and the worst was yet to come. (The final invasion took place in 586 B.C.)

As an object lesson not only to the rulers but to the population at large, Jeremiah had been told to make yokes of wood. Yokes represent submission, as oxen under a yoke must submit to the farmer. The prophet was told to wear a yoke himself, and to send yokes to the kings of certain surrounding countries. The message was that if they would willingly submit to the judgment which was surely coming, then it would be relatively mild. If, however, the leaders refused to submit, then their end would be terrible.

Hananiah arrogantly stepped up and publicly rebuked Jeremiah. He prophesied that God Himself had showed him that within two years, God would break the yoke of Babylon from about the neck of Judah. To this pronouncement, Jeremiah responded in verse 6 with irony: “Amen: the LORD do so: the LORD perform thy words which thou hast prophesied.” While Jeremiah wished that this prophecy was true, he knew it was not. He reminded the people that the true test of

the validity of a prophecy was whether or not it came to pass. Jeremiah had prophesied total domination by Babylon, with the one ray of hope being that if they would voluntarily submit, it would go much easier with them. Hananiah, on the other hand, had prophesied peace and prosperity within two years. The choice was before the people. Sadly, the majority of the people chose to ignore Jeremiah and to believe the lies of Hananiah.

Hananiah further insulted Jeremiah by breaking the wooden yoke—the one being worn in obedience to the word of God—from off his neck. Hananiah hoped this action would cause the people to believe more firmly that he was correct. Jeremiah responded by walking away. “And the prophet Jeremiah went his way.”

Later, God sent Jeremiah back to Hananiah. God’s message was that although Hananiah had physically broken the wooden yoke, God would one day create yokes of iron in its place, meaning yokes that could not be broken by man. Jeremiah also told Hananiah in verse 16 that for his sin in falsely representing God, he would die that year. Jeremiah’s word came to pass; Hananiah died in two months, which reinforced the credibility of Jeremiah’s prophecies.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - B. The conflicts of the prophet
 - 3. The conflict with Hananiah (28:1-17)
 - a. The prediction of Hananiah (28:1-4)
 - b. The rebuttal of Jeremiah (28:5-9)
 - c. The action of Hananiah (28:10-11)
 - d. The condemnation of Hananiah (28:12-17)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What was Hananiah’s message to Jeremiah?
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

2. What do you think Hananiah hoped to gain by his false prophecies?

3. What steps can we take to be sure that our spiritual ears are tuned to the truth alone?

CONCLUSION

May each of us ever hold to the truth so that we do not end up believing a lie.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.” (Jeremiah 29:12-13)

Through Charlotte Atseff’s teenage years, she was very rebellious, and after her marriage she continued on in her own way, resisting the truth she had been taught as a child. Her mother had prayed for Charlotte since the day her daughter was born, but one day that godly mother became seriously ill. As Charlotte sat by her mother’s bedside, the thought came to her mind, Who will pray for me now? What will I ever do without mother’s prayers? The Lord answered her questions by speaking to her heart: “You will pray for yourself!”

After her mother’s death, Charlotte began to reach out to the Lord and started attending a neighborhood church. One morning, alone in her house, she truly sought God with all of her heart. She confessed her sins, naming them one after another. In later years, she testified, “All of a sudden, it seemed I was the worst sinner in the world. My soul was as dark as midnight. The devil shouted at me, ‘You have gone too far,’ but at that moment the Lord showed me His Cross. I saw all my sins there on the Cross. I did not try to bargain with God—I just pled for mercy. Jesus came into my heart and forgave me. He turned me right about face. I knew the moment I was redeemed: I was a new person. All the bitterness and hatred were gone. He melted my heart like the ice is melted in the summer sun.”

In our text today, the Lord was speaking through the Prophet Jeremiah to the people of Judah who were captives in Babylon, urging them to come back to Him. Sadly, they were hardened by sin and rebellion, and unlike Charlotte, they were not willing to turn to God in their time of trouble. Despite their resistance, God was still calling after them in mercy. He was waiting for them to turn to Him, and promised that if they would just pray, He would hearken. If they would seek Him with all their hearts, He would be found of them.

What a comforting thought! No matter what spiritual condition we are in, God still invites us to pray and call upon Him. He wants us to seek Him with all our hearts, to yield our lives completely to Him, and to search diligently for His will for our lives. He says if we do this, He will be there to hear and answer our prayers.

Charlotte proved that God is just one heartfelt and sincere prayer away, and she never regretted it. We can prove that same truth in our lives!

BACKGROUND

Chapter 29 includes two letters that Jeremiah wrote to the Jewish people who were exiled in Babylon. There is also a reference to a letter written by the false prophet Shemaiah to the Temple priests.

Correspondence was not difficult at this time, as diplomatic missions were carried on between Jerusalem and Babylon. Jeremiah also had friends in high places of Judah’s government, which enabled him to keep in contact with the exiles. The first letter in this chapter was sent with Elasah the son of Shaphan, a brother to Ahikam (mentioned in chapter 26) and Gemariah, son of Hilkiah (perhaps the high priest in the time of Josiah).

The people who had been relocated to Babylon were restless and wishing to return to Judah. They were influenced by false prophets among them who were saying the captivity would be short. Jeremiah told them the captivity would be for seventy years. He encouraged them to be law-abiding, humble people, and to build homes and plant gardens. The exiles were not treated as slaves in Babylon. They could buy property, have families, and reside in their own communities. In fact, some of the Jewish people became so wealthy during this time that they decided not to return to Jerusalem when the exiles were finally released.

Verses 10-14 contain a message of hope from the Lord for the exiles. He promised that if they would seek Him again with all their hearts, He would be found of them; He would hear and answer their prayers. Beginning with verse 16, the exiles were told that they were better off than the people who had remained in Judah.

Again, perhaps in a second letter, Jeremiah warned of false prophets, naming two: Ahab and Zedekiah. Jeremiah prophesied that these two men would be burned to death (which was not an unusual form of capital punishment in Babylon) and their names would be used as an example of a curse.

Shemaiah, another false prophet in Babylon, had apparently written a letter accusing Jeremiah of being a madman and urging the authorities to imprison him (verses 24-28). In his response, Jeremiah warned the people not to believe Shemaiah, and that he and his relatives would die in exile and never see the city of Jerusalem again.

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- 3.** What will be the evidence in our lives if we are truly searching for God with all of our hearts?

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

1. What were the offenses of Ahab and Zedekiah? What punishment did Jeremiah say God would pour out on them?

[illegible]

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.” (Jeremiah 30:22)

God’s chosen people had gone far away from Him. They had committed evil until He determined to cast them out of His sight. Yet, through the Prophet Jeremiah, God gave the promise in the focus verse that one day His relationship with His people would be restored. A time would come when the Jewish people would serve Him. This promise looked ahead in part to when the seventy years of captivity was over. However, the complete fulfillment will take place in the last days when Jesus returns as King of Kings.

In the meantime, God wants a relationship with individuals today. He is calling all who are unsaved to seek His forgiveness and become His children. Some who once had an experience with the Lord have gone back into sin, and God wants that relationship to be restored. At times, relationships between individuals are broken, and God wants to restore those as well. Rudy and Bea’s marriage is an example of this. Rudy testifies, “How I thank Jesus Christ for saving me. For many years, I lived my life without any thought of God, and I made many wrong choices. I had mistreated my wife to the point that she moved out.

“While I was working for a tree-trimming company, God brought a Christian to work with me. At first, I persecuted him, but even though I looked for ways to make his work day miserable, he showed me Christian love and even invited me to church. One Friday evening, I agreed to go with him. That night God spoke to my heart and let me know that I was headed down a long dead-end street. I realized for the first time that I needed Jesus Christ.

“At the end of the service, I went to the altar of prayer and felt remorse for the way I had lived. I simply called on the Lord for help and asked Him to forgive me. He did just that! In a moment of time, He changed my life completely. The desire for drugs and alcohol that were such a part of my life was instantly removed, and the anger that controlled most of my actions was replaced with peace and joy.

“About a week after I was saved, I received a phone call letting me know that my wife was filing for divorce. Praying for her became a top priority in my life, and in time I couldn’t seem to focus on anything else spiritually. Finally, I had to give her up to the Lord, turning my marriage over to God and allowing Him to work as He knew best. Then the Lord asked

me, ‘Would you still serve Me, even if your wife never came?’ What could I say? I told Him, ‘Lord, You died for me on the Cross, and I will follow You till the day I die.’

“Often I asked the people of God to pray with me for my wife, and they rallied behind me. When I felt as though I had no more prayers left, they prayed. God was so faithful and kept me going. Then when things looked their worst and the situation was so bleak, my wife came to God and He saved her. It was wonderful! What power there is in prayer!”

God restored Rudy and Bea’s marriage, and today they have two children and are still serving God. Their story illustrates how God can restore broken relationships when people have the right relationship with Him. God is in the restoration business. Just see what He can do in your life and the lives of the people you know!

BACKGROUND

This chapter begins the four-chapter section of Jeremiah which Bible scholars often call the “Book of Consolation.” While there are differing opinions on when this chapter was written, many commentators believe it was while Jerusalem was under siege, not long before the city was destroyed. This was a dark time for the Jewish people. Looking ahead, the prophet gave hopeful words and encouragement to them.

The first three verses introduce the section and tell of a time when Israel and Judah would again possess their land. This prophecy was only partially fulfilled after the seventy years of captivity; the complete fulfillment is yet to take place when Jesus comes back to rule the world.

Jeremiah also told of the agony of Jerusalem’s destruction as well as the Great Tribulation, the latter being a terrible time of trouble yet to take place (verses 4-7). He said the pain would be so intense that men would grip their thighs like a woman does during childbirth. But verses 8-11 show that hope will come, when God “will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds.” One day, Jesus Christ, the Son of David, will come to rule not only the Hebrew people but also the world. The Jews will be gathered from the nations where they have been scattered, and will be given rest.

In verse 12, the prophet referred again to the current situation in Judah, this time using a medical illustration—their bruise was incurable and their wound grievous. There was no one to help the people because Judah’s allies were also destroyed. Yet God promised

that in time He would punish those who took them into captivity.

Verses 18-24 contain God’s promise to restore His people. The word for *heap* in Hebrew is *tel*, a word used to reference the mound of dirt and rubble left when a city was destroyed. Cities in ancient times in the Middle East were often built on top of one another, and the mound would grow with each city that was built and crushed. God’s promise to rebuild on Judah’s own *tel* indicated specifically that His people would be restored to their original location. They would not build another city in another area; they would return to the land He had promised and repossess what was their rightful inheritance.

God promised that His people would be honored, and that they would again be able to educate their children and rule themselves. Their enemies would be punished.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - C. The consolations of the prophet
 - 1. The prospect of restoration
 - a. The promise of deliverance from Jacob’s distress (30:1-11)
 - b. The promise of healing (30:12-17)
 - (1) The plight (30:12-15)
 - (2) The promise (30:16-17)
 - c. The promise of restoration (30:18-24)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What was promised in verse 3 for Judah?

2. Why do you think Jews are often viewed as “outcasts” yet today?

3. What are some ways you can improve your relationship with God?

CONCLUSION

God’s promises of salvation and restoration are for everyone who stands in need.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock.” (Jeremiah 31:10)

As a small child in Sunday school, one of my favorite pictures in my Bible storybook was the classic image of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Having grown up in the city, I had little personal knowledge about sheep—other than that Old MacDonald had some on his farm! I had no idea that sheep are notorious for wandering, are quite helpless, or that they are not a particularly smart animal. But I really loved that picture of Jesus with the sheep clustered around His side. I was especially drawn by the tender expression on the Shepherd’s face as He gazed down at the little lamb in His arms. Somehow I sensed the love and security portrayed in that picture.

In our focus verse today, Jeremiah used the imagery of a shepherd to portray God’s ultimate regathering of His people, the Israelites. The simple phrase “as a shepherd doth his flock” would have brought instant understanding to those who heard the prophet’s words, for caring for sheep was a common occupation in their society.

Shepherds of that time were very familiar with their sheep, even calling each one by name. They knew which ones would wander, and which ones needed special care. Day and night, they would watch over their flocks, even risking their own lives to protect them. Every day they would lead their sheep to sources of food and water, and every night they would gather them into the safety of the sheepfold.

Though God would scatter His rebellious children because of their rejection of Him, in this passage the prophet declared to the people of the world that God would not make a full end of His chosen ones, but would someday bring them back to their land. This was a promise of a literal return of both Israel and Judah to the land God had promised to their ancestors. The imagery of a shepherd was expressive of the compassion God still had for His wayward people, offering a glimmer of hope in the midst of the terrible desolation that would soon be coming upon them.

God’s compassion, as manifested to Israel in this passage, is also available to all today who are willing to become a part of His spiritual flock and participate in the New Covenant described in this chapter. The tender care of our Good Shepherd is our source of

security in a troubled world. How grateful we should be that we can look to Him to care for us, protect us, and provide for our needs!

BACKGROUND

In this chapter, the prophet continued with the theme of the restoration of Israel, and God’s establishment of a New Covenant with His people. God’s compassion was turned toward Israel as a nation, and He declared His intention of future blessing to the Jews in a series of promises, culminating in the pronouncement that the nation would one day return from exile and captivity. The passage is one of the most sweeping prophecies in scope in the Old Testament, as it relates not only to the Jews’ return from captivity, but also to their ultimate spiritual redemption through the coming Messiah.

The prophecy encapsulates specific historical landmarks of Jewish history from the time the prophecy was delivered, through today, and into the future. God told the people that they would return into the land and plant again. He brought this to pass when Persia conquered Babylon and King Cyrus allowed the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the return of the captives. Yet the second stage of the return, mentioned in verse 10 of the text, goes far beyond the initial return to Israel from Assyria or Persia, or even the formation of the Jewish nation in 1948. It includes the Jewish people’s return to Israel beyond our day.

Buried within the prophecy is a reference to the birth of Christ. The phrase “Rahel weeping for her children” (verse 15) alluded to the slaughter of innocent children in Bethlehem by the hand of King Herod when he heard of the birth of Jesus. Verses 16 and 17 indicate a two-fold application of this prophecy, as they point to the national restoration which will occur in the end times.

Verses 31 through 34 look ahead to a new and better covenant whereby God’s laws will reside in the hearts of His people, so no teacher will be required to chaperone obedience. In verses 35 through 40, God guaranteed the perpetual existence of His people, basing this promise upon the certainty that He continuously sustains His creation. God pronounced that the whole land would again be holy and that Jerusalem would be rebuilt and be His permanently.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - C. The consolations of the prophet
 - 1. The prospect of restoration

- d. The promise of loving care (31:1-6)
- e. The promise of gladness (31:7-14)
- f. The promise of comfort (31:15-17)
- g. The promise of renewal (31:18-30)
- h. The promise of a New Covenant (31:31-34)
- i. The promise of permanence (31:35-40)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. From where did the prophet say that God would gather His people?

2. Why do you think God inspired the prophet to use the picturesque imagery of dancing and singing in this passage?

3. How can we participate in the New Covenant that God promised Israel?

CONCLUSION

Are you part of God's flock? If so, you can depend upon the compassion and tender care of your Good Shepherd!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“So Hanameel mine uncle’s son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the LORD, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself. Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD.” (Jeremiah 32:8)

Several years ago I had a good job at a bank in downtown Portland. I had just received a promotion, and had been assured of continued advancement at that location. However, God impressed upon my heart that I should post for a position at a much smaller branch. My wife and I prayed about it, and strongly felt that was what the Lord would have me to do, so I applied for a job at that smaller location.

My boss at the time was baffled at my decision, and did his best to convince me that this was a terrible career move. He could not understand why I would choose to leave what he felt was a very good position with much potential for advancement. His view of the situation seemed to be confirmed about a month or so later when I went to the new location and promptly found out that the branch was going to be closed! I began to wonder, God, why did You send me here? I felt so sure that You wanted me to take this position.

About a week later I received instructions to go to work at yet another location, and in the end several transfers were made, causing me to be promoted in a way that does not normally happen. I look back at it and just marvel. God had it figured out all along the way. All I had to do was trust Him and obey.

In our focus verse, the Prophet Jeremiah felt led of God to take an unusual step. God told Jeremiah that his cousin Hanameel would come and ask him to buy land in Anathoth, an area that had already been seized by the enemy Chaldeans. Given that Jeremiah was in prison and knew the captivity of Judah would last for seventy years, the command on the surface would seem illogical and poorly timed. However, Jeremiah was assured that this instruction was indeed from God, and he followed through in obedience. The prophet’s act of faith concretely demonstrated to the people of Judah that God would one day restore their land and rebuild Jerusalem.

In our day too, we may be called on by the Lord to follow Him in ways that we do not understand. Though the timing and circumstances may appear

strange to us, we need to obey. We can trust that the God who fulfilled His “impossible” promises to Jeremiah is also in control of our future. He will work in our lives if we will only follow Him in obedience.

BACKGROUND

Today’s text tells of Jeremiah buying a field in his hometown, which was an object lesson illustrating God’s promise to restore the land of the Jewish people. The events of the chapter took place in the tenth year of Zedekiah. Jerusalem had been under siege by Babylon since the previous year. Verses 3-5 could be in parenthesis because they explain why Jeremiah was in prison.

According to the Law, Jeremiah met the qualifications to redeem the specified property in Anathoth. His purchase of the land was a demonstration of his faith that God would fulfill His promise to restore the Jewish people to their homeland. The transaction was accomplished using all the legal and business steps of the time. Gold and silver were weighed because there were not yet any Jewish coins. While the value of the shekel at that time is not known, it seems that the amount was small. However, scholars believe that Jeremiah paid what was considered the full price. A deed was signed and witnessed, and then it was stored in a pottery container that was probably sealed with pitch, which was a common method of preserving important documents. A duplicate deed was available for people’s review.

Baruch was a scribe and he recorded many of Jeremiah’s prophecies. This is the first time his name is mentioned in the Book of Jeremiah.

Verses 16-25 contain Jeremiah’s prayer after he had purchased the property. He needed reassurance, and his prayer is exemplary. He considered God’s greatness and omniscience, and recounted past miracles. Then he mentioned the “mounts” (verse 24), which were terraces the enemy built outside the wall of Jerusalem to gain a better firing angle to reach within the wall. Jeremiah’s obedience demonstrated his faith in God’s word, since the famine and pestilence that had been prophesied had already begun.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - C. The consolations of the prophet
 - 2. The surety of restoration demonstrated
 - a. The purchase of land from Hanameel (32:1-15)
 - b. The prayer of Jeremiah (32:16-25)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Who was responsible for confining Jeremiah in prison?

2 Why do you think Jeremiah went ahead and obeyed

2. Why do you think Jeremiah went ahead and obeyed God's command to acquire property, even though it did not seem a logical thing to do?

3. In what ways has God reassured you in times when He has led you to take a step of faith?

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

It takes trust and faith in God to do what He has called us to do even when we do not understand, but we will be blessed if we do so.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?”
(Jeremiah 32:27)**

The tiny baby boy screamed in pain in a cold village field on the outskirts of Langfang, China. He was covered with burns over seventy percent of his body, and one arm was just a charred stump. The villagers who had heard the baby’s cries and come to investigate turned away with anguish on their faces. Nothing could save this infant, who clearly had been the victim of a terrible accident and had been left to die by parents who had no idea how to help him; he had even been wrapped in burial clothes. But one older villager stayed behind. Moved with pity, he cautiously gathered the agonized child in his arms and went for help.

That one act of compassion sparked a miraculous series of events involving people from different countries, faiths, and social backgrounds. God had ordained that the impossible would happen—little Levi, as he was later named, would live, and would have a secure future with a family who loved him.

John and Lisa Bentley had come to China just a few weeks earlier to build an orphanage in a village near Beijing. The moment they laid eyes on this tiny infant, their hearts were touched by his desperate plight. They were convinced that God wanted them to fight for Levi’s life. “I might have looked at Levi’s circumstances and decided he was too much of a long shot,” Lisa says. “Instead, I decided to focus on what God could accomplish.”¹ Time after time, John and Lisa saw God work amazing miracles as they struggled to keep the tiny infant alive and make arrangements with the Chinese government for his release and transport to the United States where his terrible burns could be dealt with.

Even after Lisa and Levi arrived in Boston, where a team of surgeons had agreed to operate on the tiny boy, God’s miraculous provision was apparent. Just hours after their arrival, fatigued and emotionally at her limit after the long flight, Lisa found herself driving through heavy traffic in Boston, unsure of how to find her destination. In desperation she stopped, rolled down the car window, and spoke to the first couple who caught her eye. She told them she was visiting from China, and asked if they could give her directions. The couple looked at her and then asked an astonishing question: “Are you Lisa Bentley?” They turned out to be friends of a woman in China who had

assisted them in making travel arrangements! They were both pediatric doctors, and ultimately became key players in supervising Levi’s recovery in the United States. Was that meeting on the busy streets of Boston just chance? No, John and Lisa knew that it was another evidence that God can do the impossible.

In our focus verse, God reminded Jeremiah of this same great truth. He asked the prophet a piercing question: “I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?” The situation facing this man of God, like the situation facing little Levi, seemed impossible. But God is able!

Today, when we face circumstances that seem to have no solution, we must remember that we serve an all-powerful God. Nothing we face is beyond Him. No problem that comes our way is too big for Him to solve. Let us grasp hold of that fact, and hold on in faith!

BACKGROUND

This text continues the dialog that took place between Jeremiah and God after Jeremiah had purchased land in Anathoth from his cousin. In spite of Jerusalem being surrounded by the Chaldeans, God had told Jeremiah to buy the property, which was in an area already controlled by the invading army. Then Jeremiah prayed, seeking confirmation for his act of faith. This last portion of chapter 32 gives God’s response to Jeremiah’s prayer.

Jeremiah had said to God in verse 17, “There is nothing too hard for thee.” In verse 27, God changed Jeremiah’s statement into a question, “Is there any thing too hard for me?” He was reminding Jeremiah that He, not the Chaldeans, controlled the events of the world.

Then in verses 28-35, God restated why Judah would be punished. Jerusalem would be captured and destroyed, and the people removed to Babylon, because of Judah’s refusal to obey God’s commandments in the Law of Moses and the teaching of the prophets. Their homes would be destroyed because they made sacrifices to idols from the roofs. The Temple would be demolished because they had polluted it with images of other “gods.” Since the Book of Jeremiah often contains references to “rising early,” it appears it was common in Judah for prophets to preach in the morning.

In verses 36-42 God assured the prophet again that He would gather the Jews back to their land, and that He would give them “one heart.” They would fear Him, for their good and also for the good of their

children. Although part of this prophesy was fulfilled when the Jews returned from Babylon during the reign of Cyrus, the complete fulfillment will not occur until God delivers the Jewish people in the last days.

The last two verses of the chapter confirm the step Jeremiah took to buy the property. His action illustrated that in time, land would again be purchased by God's people.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - C. The consolations of the prophet
 - 2. The surety of restoration demonstrated
 - c. The purposes of Jehovah (32:26-44)
 - (1) The destruction of Jerusalem (32:26-35)
 - (2) The future repopulation of Israel (32:36-44)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What specific reasons did the Lord give in verses 29 to 35 for removing the people of Judah from the land and destroying Jerusalem?

2. After instructing Jeremiah to do an unusual task, why do you think God asked him a question that focused the prophet's attention on His omnipotence?

3. What steps should we take if we are uncertain of what God seems to be telling us to do?

CONCLUSION

God is omnipotent, and He uses His power to accomplish His purposes. There is absolutely nothing too hard for Him!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.” (Jeremiah 33:3)

George Fredrick Müller (1805-1898) was an evangelist and the founder of several orphanages in Bristol, England. More than ten thousand orphans were cared for in those homes during his lifetime. Rather than asking people for monetary support, Müller laid the orphanages’ needs before the Lord, and trusted Him to provide. At times his faith was tested to the extreme, but God always supplied food and provisions for the children.

One year, with winter fast approaching, the boiler of one of the orphan houses—the main heat source—was leaking badly, requiring repair or replacement. But first, the brickwork which completely surrounded the boiler had to be taken away, a process that alone could take days. The leak was great enough that it was questionable whether repairs were possible, and nothing could be ascertained until the brickwork was removed. Temporary forms of heating were impractical for various reasons, and three hundred children, who would suffer in cold rooms, relied on the heat provided by the boiler.

George Müller determined to place the situation entirely into the Hands of the Almighty, trusting in His mercy and tender compassion. A date was chosen for the beginning of the project, and necessary arrangements were made. The fire was to go out on a Wednesday, and the Friday before that day, a north wind began to blow in earnest, bringing frigid weather. Since plans were already in motion for this necessary repair, in prayer Müller asked the Lord for two specific things: that the north wind would become a south wind, and that He would give the workmen a mind to work.

Tuesday evening was still very cold, but on Wednesday the wind came from the south, and the weather was so mild that no fire was needed. The bricks were removed, the leak was soon found, and repairs began. When the boilermakers’ boss came that evening, he said that his men could work late, and return early in the morning. But the leader of the men said, “We would rather work all night, Sir.” By morning the leak was fixed, and within thirty hours, the bricks were back in place. During the entire project, the weather was so warm that there was no need of any heat.

God had once again wonderfully answered prayer! The weather, completely beyond human control, was but a small thing to Him. Requesting the workmen to work through the night was not something Müller could do. However, God resolved both issues in a beautiful way, and the children were not adversely affected.

In our focus verse, God gave Jeremiah a wonderful promise. The prophet was being held prisoner for proclaiming that the enemy would overrun the city of Jerusalem, but there in the depths of the dungeon, he received the assurance that God would hear and answer his prayers.

What requests will you bring to the Lord? We can ask for specific needs, just as George Müller requested the warm weather and the mind to work. We can call upon Him, and He promises to answer, showing us great and mighty things—things that we have not even thought of! God wants to be depended upon. If we ask according to His will with unwavering faith, it is His good pleasure to answer us. Depend on God!

BACKGROUND

From the court of the prison, while Jerusalem was under siege by the Chaldeans, the Prophet Jeremiah gave Judah and Israel hope for the future. Although their city lay desolate, with many already carried away captive, the time would come when God would bring them back and restore their land, their throne, and their worship of God.

Throughout this chapter we read many promises of God’s good intentions for His people. He reassured the people that, in spite of the fact that they had disobeyed and followed other gods, when they turned back to Him, He would bring health, reveal peace and truth, and cleanse their iniquities. His name would be praised and honored by all the nations of the earth.

Furthermore, God promised that Israel again would experience joy and gladness in their land, and would feel grateful for what the Lord had done. They would be at peace, a quality the prophet poetically illustrated with a picture of shepherds guiding their flocks throughout the land.

In verse 14 we read a prophecy of Jesus, the Branch of righteousness, Who was to bring justice. God also promised that the house of David would always have a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel. The priests of the Tribe of Levi would never lack a man to offer the sacrifices. And Israel’s descendants would be as abundant as the sand of the sea, and as the host of Heaven.

God’s covenant with Israel was absolutely unwavering — as sure as the fact that night follows day in each twenty-four-hour time frame. Verses 20-21 read, “If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night . . . then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant.” The descendants of David were assured of God’s covenant with them.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE Hannah’s Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - C. The consolations of the prophet
 - 3. The promise of restoration restated (33:1-26)
 - a. The promise of the renewal of the people (33:1-9)
 - b. The promise of the restoration of the land (33:10-14)
 - c. The promise of the restoration of the throne (33:15-17)
 - d. The promise of the restoration of Temple worship (33:18-22)
 - e. The promise of Israel’s permanence (33:23-26)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. With what natural law did God compare the absolute certainty that his covenant with David would be honored?

2. Why do you think God tempered His judgment of disobedient Judah with these proclamations of mercy?

3. What are some of the “great and mighty” things God has already done in your life?

CONCLUSION

We serve a tender and compassionate God, Who wants to be our source of strength. He desires to answer our prayers — we just need to ask.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Now when all the princes, and all the people, which had entered into the covenant, heard that every one should let his manservant, and every one his maidservant, go free, that none should serve themselves of them any more, then they obeyed, and let them go. But afterward they turned, and caused the servants and the handmaids, whom they had let go free, to return, and brought them into subjection for servants and for handmaids.” (Jeremiah 34:10-11)

My father was a businessman who put a high value on personal integrity and was well known for conducting his dealings honestly. He was of the generation who believed that “your word is your bond.” As the owner of retail shoe stores, he once went to a bank to obtain a loan for business expansion. An agreement in principle was reached and the proper papers were drawn up. When the banker brought up the matter of collateral to secure the loan, my father told him that he intended to use the value of the store inventory as security. The banker agreed, but then said, “Mr. Habre, that would be fine, but I would need to come to one of the stores and confirm that there are shoes in the boxes.” The very idea of such scrutiny stunned my father and he was so insulted by this lack of trust in his word that he stood up, said the deal was off, and walked out of the bank. Later he made arrangements to secure a loan from another lending institution that had no problem with taking him at his word, believing that he had adequate security to cover the loan. After all, you can trust the word of a person of integrity.

King Zedekiah and the people of Judah had not learned this important lesson. Hoping to win God’s favor when their country was under siege, they covenanted with God that they would let their Hebrew slaves go free, and they did so for a time. However, as the focus verses reveal, they soon went back on their word and once again violated their covenant with God. Re-enslaving their brothers and sisters was no insignificant matter, and they would pay for their covenant-breaking behavior with the loss of their own freedom when they were taken into captivity.

Today, God wants His children to keep their word. It is important to be sincere when we tell Him that we will serve Him and do what He wants us to do. Then we need to follow through and live out that commitment. Our obedience will be demonstrated, in

part, by keeping our word to those around us — business associates, family members, employees, and employers. God will honor those who keep His Word and their commitments.

BACKGROUND

Jeremiah 34 was written as Jerusalem and Judah were falling to the Babylonians in 588 B.C. King Zedekiah had been allegiant to Babylon, but then went back on his word and turned instead to the Egyptians for aid against the Babylonians. This political backdrop explains the covenant-making and covenant-breaking behavior of King Zedekiah and the people of Judah. Before allying with the Egyptians, King Zedekiah and his people renewed their covenant with God in the hope that He would intervene on their behalf against the Babylonians. As a sign of the renewed covenant, they released all their Hebrew bondslaves.

However, when Zedekiah broke his agreement with King Nebuchadnezzar, his people followed his example and broke their renewed covenant with God. Since the Egyptians were stepping in to provide a brief respite from the onslaught of the Babylonians, the people of Judah thought that they could get away with re-enslaving their fellow Hebrews.

Through the Prophet Jeremiah, God announced that He had had enough of this covenant-breaking behavior. Jerusalem would fall to King Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians, and the people of Judah would be taken into captivity. The Jewish historian Josephus recorded the words that King Nebuchadnezzar supposedly spoke to King Zedekiah as he held the Jewish leader accountable for breaking their treaty: “When he was come, Nebuchadnezzar began to call him a wicked wretch, and a covenant-breaker, and one that had forgotten his former words, when he promised to keep the country for him.” Evidently, even the pagan leader of Babylon could see that the Hand of God was working against Zedekiah and Judah for their broken promises, for he said, “God is great who hath that conduct of thine, and hath brought thee under us.”¹

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - D. The circumstances of the prophet
 - 1. Jeremiah’s experiences before Jerusalem’s fall
 - a. The message to Zedekiah (34:1-22)

- (1) The fact of approaching judgment (34:1-7)
- (2) The reason for approaching judgment (34:8-22)
 - (a) The covenant broken (34:8-11)
 - (b) The covenant reviewed (34:12-16)
 - (c) The result of breaking the covenant (34:17-22)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What was Zedekiah told regarding the manner of his death and how he would be mourned?

2. Why do you think the people of Judah went back on their word after they had agreed to let their slaves go?

3. What are some of the positive consequences of keeping our word?

CONCLUSION

As followers of Christ who seek to emulate our Heavenly Father, we should never allow personal expedience to undermine our promises. As God the Father is faithful, we too must be faithful to keep the covenants and promises that we make.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye nor your sons for ever.” (Jeremiah 35:6)

Resolute commitment is admirable. Pauline Port, a godly woman from Memphis, Tennessee, had a great love for others, especially those who were down and out in life and also those who could not read. At eighty-eight years of age, she began working with a ministry that taught reading, and she was also active in sharing God’s love by visiting prisoners. After some time, Pauline was a recipient of the *Point of Light Award*, a program started by President George H. W. Bush’s administration to encourage and recognize volunteer service of people helping to solve community problems.

President Bush wanted to personally deliver Pauline’s award, and he invited the elderly woman to have lunch with him. However, she politely declined, saying she could not make the lunch appointment because that was the day she visited those at the state prison in Parchman, Mississippi, to “share God’s love with them.” She was resolutely committed to her opportunities for ministry, and she refused to be hindered even by the President of the United States.¹

Today’s focus verse shows that the Rechabites were also resolutely committed to their way of living. They had purposed to follow the honorable teachings of their fathers, and were determined that nothing would stop or hinder them. Jeremiah, at the Lord’s command, brought the whole group of Rechabites into the House of the Lord and set pots of wine and cups before them. He said, “Drink ye wine,” but they refused. They were totally committed to following and obeying what their fathers had commanded them over two hundred years before. In contrast, the people of Judah had no commitment to following God’s instructions. Jeremiah was told to use the Rechabites as a contrasting illustration, showing how unheeding and rebellious the Jewish people had been.

We also will make choices about whether or not we are resolutely committed to serving God. There will be opportunities to be sidetracked or enticed away from that purpose. However, if we, like the Rechabites, will determine to obey God, we will be blessed ourselves and will be a blessing to others. Making our commitment to God our top priority will benefit in the end.

BACKGROUND

The Rechabites were a tribe of nomads who fed their flocks in the deserts of Judea and probably were descendants of Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses. They were very loyal to their ancestor, Jonadab, who commanded them not to live in houses, not to have farms, not to plant vineyards, and not to drink wine of any kind. For over two-hundred-fifty years they had followed these commands of their ancestors. The Rechabites’ whole religious and political institution consisted of obedience and commitment to the teachings of their fathers.

Verse 6 indicates that the Rechabites were instructed to drink no wine. Some commentators believe these instructions regarding temperance were given so nothing would deprive them of their sober reasoning, and thus cause them to hurt someone or show dishonor to God. They were also instructed not to build houses (verse 7). It is thought this was because if they became residents of a place, they would collect earthly possessions that might cause envy. Verse 10 states, “We have dwelt in tents . . .” showing how the Rechabites followed their ancestors who also lived in tents.

God did not ask Jeremiah to serve the Rechabites wine in order to tempt them, but to give Jeremiah the opportunity to show the leaders of Judah how unfaithful they had been to God. When the Rechabites refused to drink wine because they wanted to obey their fathers before them, God used it as an object lesson to Judah of their own disobedience to God.

The message to the nation of Judah was clear and repeated over and over by the prophets; yet this law of God was treated with much disrespect by the people. When Jeremiah talked to the leaders of Judah, he commented on how the tradition of the Rechabites was honored and preserved with such dedication. Because of Judah’s lack of commitment and disobedience to God, serious judgment would fall on the nation while the Rechabites would have an eternal relationship with God with continual protection and blessings.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - D. The circumstances of the prophet
 - 1. Jeremiah’s experiences before Jerusalem’s fall
 - b. The message on the Rechabites (35:1-19)

- (1) The observance of the Rechabites (35:1-11)
- (2) The lesson from the Rechabites (35:12-17)
- (3) The reward of the Rechabites (35:18-19)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What had God's prophets told the people of Judah?

2. What do you think had inspired the Rechabites to be so resolute through the years?

3. What can be learned from the Rechabites' dedication and commitment to the laws of their fathers?

CONCLUSION

Christians today, like the ancient Rechabites, can be totally committed to the Lord, not letting anything hinder them in their loyalty and service to God.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying, Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned.” (Jeremiah 36:27-28)

As part of his continuing education, my son-in-law Chris signed up for an online college class titled “History of the Old Testament: Understanding the Bible.” Being eager to expand his knowledge of how the Bible was written and learn something about the cultural and historical context of the Scriptures, he thought the course would be helpful.

However, it did not take long for Chris to begin feeling uncomfortable with the perspective offered in the assigned textbook. He did a little research on the author, and discovered that this man is part of a group who organizes seminars about Jesus. They teach that Jesus was just an itinerant Hellenistic Jewish sage who did not die as a substitute for sinners nor rise from the dead, but preached a social gospel in startling parables and general truths. That explained a lot about the disbelieving approach Chris had identified in his textbook! He observed that the course should have been subtitled, “Understanding how to try to disprove the Bible.”

Chris certainly is not the first person to come across an antagonistic attitude toward God’s Word. Since the beginning of time, Satan has tried to eradicate its divinely inspired truth. However, the Holy Bible has withstood countless attempts to destroy it and to discredit its authority over the centuries.

In today’s text, King Jehoiakim joined the infamous lineup of those who have attempted to do away with God’s words. In an impassioned rage, he cut out each column of the scroll written by Jeremiah and burned them all. However, our focus verse relates that God simply commanded Jeremiah to rewrite the prophecy.

Jehoiakim did not succeed in destroying God’s Word, nor has anyone else through the ages who has tried. One Bible expositor and author summed up a profound truth when he said, “Infidels with all their assaults, make about as much impression on this book as a man with a tack hammer would on the Pyramids of Egypt. When the French monarch proposed the persecution of the Christians in his dominion, an old

statesman and warrior said to him, ‘Sire, the Church of God is an anvil that has worn out many hammers.’ So the hammers of infidels have been pecking away at this book for ages, but the hammers are worn out, and the anvil still endures. If this book had not been the book of God, men would have destroyed it long ago. Emperors and popes, kings and priests, princes and rulers have all tried their hands at it; they die and the book still lives.”¹

As Christians today, we almost certainly will find ourselves confronted at times with philosophies, world views, and individuals who contest the veracity and authority of God’s Word. Let us purpose to value the Word of God, and not hesitate to stand for it!

BACKGROUND

In the fourth year of Jehoiakim’s reign, God directed the Prophet Jeremiah to write down the prophecies he had been given. God’s judgment on Judah was imminent, but He wanted to give the people another opportunity to turn from their evil ways.

Baruch, who recorded Jeremiah’s dictation, was a scribe. He was a man of learning and position, and he would have been familiar with the customs and laws of the time. The “roll of a book” was likely made of papyrus, parchment, or vellum (from animal skins). Pieces were sewn together and rolled on a piece of wood.

During the fifth year of Jehoiakim’s reign, the people of Judah came to the Temple for a fast, perhaps because of the Babylonian army’s earlier attack on Jerusalem. Although Jeremiah was not in prison at this time, he was out of favor with the rulers and many of the common people. Therefore, he was not allowed to go to the Temple, and he asked Baruch to read the roll to the people assembled there.

Gemariah was a prince. His son, Michaiah, heard Baruch’s reading and went to tell the other princes who were assembled at the king’s house. They called for Baruch and were fearful when they heard the message. They wanted confirmation that Baruch had indeed recorded Jeremiah’s words. Then they said the matter must go to the king, and advised Baruch that he and Jeremiah should go into hiding.

The ninth month was December, and Jehoiakim was in his winterhouse, probably an area of the palace that was kept warmer. The fire could have been in a metal or earthen pan. Jehoiakim commanded the scroll to be brought and read. The king was so infuriated that he cut up the scroll with a penknife—a knife that scribes used to cut scroll pages and sharpen reed

pens—and burned it, showing his contempt for what God had said. Three men of the group—Elnathan, Delaiah, and Gemariah—pled with the king not to burn the scroll, but to no avail. The king ordered the apprehension of Jeremiah and Baruch, but “the LORD hid them.”

God told Jeremiah to write the words again, which he did. The second writing contained special judgments upon the king for his wickedness in denying the original prophecy.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - D. The circumstances of the prophet
 - 1. Jeremiah's experiences before Jerusalem's fall
 - c. The recording of Jeremiah's prophecies (36:1-32)
 - (1) The writing of the scroll (36:1-8)
 - (2) The reading of the scroll (36:9-21)
 - (3) The burning of the scroll (36:22-26)
 - (4) The rewriting of the scroll (36:27-32)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why did Jeremiah tell Baruch to take the scroll and read God's message to the people, instead of going himself?

2. Why do you think the princes told Baruch to go and hide, along with Jeremiah, while they read the scroll to the king?

3. How can we be bold to stand up for the cause of Christ?

CONCLUSION

Today, as in all generations of time, there are those who reject the Bible, but they cannot destroy it. God's Word will stand forever!

NOTES

1. H. L. Hastings, quoted in John W. Lea, *The Greatest Book In the World*, (1929), pgs. 17-18.



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Ebed-melech went forth out of the king’s house, and spake to the king, saying, My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is: for there is no more bread in the city.” (Jeremiah 38:8-9)

Occasionally, God gives people an opportunity to take heroic action. Harriet Tubman was one of those. Born a slave in 1820, she was assigned to do housework when she was five years old, and then later worked in the fields. At fifteen, she was injured by a heavy weight hitting her head as she blocked an overseer who was aiming for another slave. In 1849, she escaped from Maryland to Philadelphia, thereby gaining freedom. Before long, however, Harriet went back to help some of her family members escape. At great risk to herself, she became a “conductor” on the “underground railroad,” making eighteen or nineteen more trips back to help guide slaves to freedom. This was accomplished by using secret routes and staying in “safe houses”—the homes of abolitionists. When the Fugitive Slave Act was passed, Harriet Tubman again lost her official freedom, and therefore had to operate more secretly. At one time, a reward of forty thousand dollars was offered for her capture, but no one betrayed her. She is credited with guiding more than two hundred slaves to freedom. The courageous woman was willing to repeatedly risk her life to use her opportunities to the greatest advantage.

Today’s text tells of a man who also took great personal risk for the sake of another person’s life. When Ebed-melech found out that Jeremiah had been put in the cistern and would die there, he was willing to seek out King Zedekiah and plead Jeremiah’s cause. Ebed-melech knew the hatred the court officials had for Jeremiah, so he was aware of the ramifications his actions might cause. Still, he had the courage to speak out, and then to go and rescue the prophet.

How about us? We probably have never helped lead a slave to freedom or rescued a prophet from a cistern. However, we are all called to be loyal to God and to stand for His Word and principles. At times this may involve some personal risk. Are we willing to be like Harriet Tubman and Ebed-melech and have the courage to follow our convictions? God has promised to be with us and give His grace if we will purpose

in our hearts to fully follow Him. He can help us be strong in His cause.

BACKGROUND

These two chapters detail events that transpired not long before Jerusalem fell. Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, was defiant, disobedient, wicked, and a coward. He was torn between Jeremiah’s prophetic warnings, and pressure from the people and his court officials. Because of these political influences, at times the very life of Jeremiah was in danger.

In chapter 37 verse 3, King Zedekiah sent Jehucal and Zephaniah to Jeremiah, asking prayer for himself and the nation. Judah had been subject to Babylon, but then the Egyptian army under Pharaoh-hophra made advances northward. Upon hearing this news, the Chaldeans withdrew from Jerusalem (verse 5), which lured the people of Judah into a false sense of security. Jeremiah’s response to King Zedekiah remained the same. The message was that even if all the Chaldean army was wounded, Jerusalem would still be destroyed (verse 10).

Jeremiah endeavored to leave Jerusalem while the Chaldeans were temporarily gone (verse 12), but was arrested by a guard who accused him of deserting and took him to the princes. These officials detested Jeremiah, so they beat and then imprisoned him. The words *dungeon* and *cabins* could be translated “the dungeon cells.” Jeremiah was in this despicable and unsanitary prison “for many days,” which began to take a toll on his health.

Once again, King Zedekiah approached Jeremiah to see if he had any word from God concerning Judah (verse 17). It seems the king was hopeful that God had changed His mind, but the message remained the same. Zedekiah must have felt some sympathy for Jeremiah, because he had him placed into the court of the prison. In this area, Jeremiah could move about, and his friends could come to see him. Also, the king directed that he be given some food.

In the court of the prison, Jeremiah was able to continue giving his warnings. Some of the officials heard about this (chapter 38), and they requested permission from the king to put the prophet to death, accusing him of trying to weaken the people. King Zedekiah gave Jeremiah into the hands of the princes, and they put him into a cistern. Used to collect water when it rained, this cistern had only mud in the bottom. Verse 6 says, “Jeremiah sunk in the mire”; the historian Josephus says he sank up to his neck. The princes expected him to die there.

Ebed-melech, a eunuch on the king's staff, found out about Jeremiah's situation. He went to Zedekiah at the gate of Benjamin. After receiving permission from the king, Ebed-melech took a group and rescued the prophet from the dungeon, using rags to cushion his arms while he was pulled from the mire's suction. He was returned to the court of the prison.

King Zedekiah again approached Jeremiah for counseling (verse 14). Jeremiah responded only after the king swore to protect him. In what was probably his last meeting with this king, Jeremiah's message remained consistent. Zedekiah was told to surrender to the Chaldeans and survive, or disobey God and face dire consequences. Zedekiah expressed his fear of the Jews, but Jeremiah told him emphatically that it would be far better to surrender. The king wanted this interview to remain secret, and Jeremiah cooperated with his request.

Jeremiah lived in the court of the prison until the city of Jerusalem was taken.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - D. The circumstances of the prophet
 - 2. Jeremiah's experiences during Jerusalem's fall
 - a. The first interview with Zedekiah (37:1-10)
 - (1) The request for prayer (37:1-3)
 - (2) The advance of Egypt (37:4-5)
 - (3) The surety of Jerusalem's defeat (37:6-10)
 - b. The imprisonment in a dungeon (37:11-16)
 - c. The second interview with Zedekiah (37:17-21)
 - d. The imprisonment in a cistern (38:1-13)
 - e. The third interview with Zedekiah (38:14-28)
 - (1) The request of Jeremiah (38:14-16)
 - (2) The answer of Jeremiah (38:17-23)
 - (3) The concealment of Jeremiah (38:24-28)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Why did the princes of Judah ask the king to have Jeremiah put to death?

2. How should King Zedekiah have responded to the message of Jeremiah?

3. What can we learn from Zedekiah's reluctance to obey God's instructions?

CONCLUSION

We want to be willing to stand for God in whatever situations He allows in our lives. He will give us the courage if we ask.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Now Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, saying, Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee.” (Jeremiah 39:11-12)

God always cares and watches out for His faithful followers, and sometimes that is demonstrated in remarkable ways. For example, in the late 1970s, a young Christian man, Beni, was conscripted into the army in communist Romania. He knew that God would be with him and “look well” to him as he continued serving the Lord while in the military.

Beni was first sent to the military base in the country’s capital, Bucharest. While there at a general assembly, an extremely gruff colonel asked the large crowd of new soldiers, “Are there any Christians here?” Beni hesitated for a moment and then raised his hand. He was the only one in the crowd of over one thousand men to do so. Quickly the military police came and took him away.

A captain then gave him a second chance—an opportunity to change his mind—but he was unwilling to deny his faith. The captain let Beni know that he was going to send him to a prison where there was an exceptionally cruel guard. He said this guard was so mean that he literally walked around grinding his teeth and relished beating the inmates.

A few days after arriving at the prison, the mean guard came into Beni’s cell and roared, “So, you’re a Christian!” “Yes I am,” Beni replied. At that reply, the guard’s countenance softened and he told Beni that his mother was a Christian. Rather than causing Beni any harm, this guard treated him well and protected him during his time at that prison. None of the harm the captain imagined ever happened to Beni while he was in the army. Because of Beni’s faithfulness, God caused the guard to act in an uncharacteristic way.

Similarly, God caused Nebuchadnezzar to act in an unusual way and arrange for the Prophet Jeremiah to be treated well. Jeremiah was in Jerusalem when the Babylonian army, which was known for its cruelty, breached the walls and sacked the city. However, Jeremiah had remained faithful in his service to God and during this time of vicious destruction, he was treated well and no harm came to him.

Like Beni and Jeremiah, if we determine to be faithful and stand for God no matter the personal cost, the Lord will work on our behalf. At times it may not

seem as if our lives “go well,” and we may not have the blessing of being free from harm here on earth. However, we will have the benefits of God’s comfort and strength even during the most difficult of times. And in addition, we have the ultimate “no harm” promise of eternal life to come as we keep faithfully serving Christ.

BACKGROUND

Chapter 39 tells of the fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecies when the king of Babylon took and destroyed Jerusalem, the care given to Jeremiah, and God’s promise to Ebed-melech.

The Lord used Nebuchadnezzar as an instrument of judgment against the rebellious country of Judah. The Babylonian army besieged Jerusalem, beginning in the winter—December/January—and finally breaking through the walls in June/July, eighteen months later. The conquerors established themselves at the “middle gate.” Bible scholars are unsure of exactly where this gate was located, but some believe it was between the upper and lower portions of the city. From this place the Chaldeans exercised their control, no doubt thoroughly searching the city for potential ambushes.

Zedekiah, Judah’s king, had been appointed by Nebuchadnezzar but had rebelled, prompting this enemy attack. Jeremiah had counseled Zedekiah to submit to the Chaldeans (38:17), but he had refused. When Zedekiah saw that the enemy had triumphed, he fled the city, but he was soon captured and brought before Nebuchadnezzar for sentencing. His sons were killed in front of him before his eyes were put out. Since Zedekiah was in his early thirties, these children were probably quite young. Nebuchadnezzar also killed all the nobles of Judah. Jeremiah had warned all of these people to surrender to the king of Babylon and live. Their refusal to heed God’s warnings led to their violent deaths.

A month after taking Jerusalem (Jeremiah 52:12), under Nebuzar-adan’s leadership, the Babylonians burned the Temple and the king’s palace and destroyed the city’s fortifications. The final deportation took place, and only poor people who would offer no resistance were left in Judah.

King Nebuchadnezzar gave direct instructions concerning Jeremiah. No doubt Babylonian officials had heard of Jeremiah, either from their own military intelligence work or from Jewish deserters and captives. They would have known that Jeremiah had prophesied of their victory and had urged Judah’s

leaders to surrender willingly. Perhaps for that reason, Nebuzar-adan was told to allow Jeremiah whatever he asked for. He was committed to Gedaliah, who had been appointed as the area governor, and Gedaliah may have taken him to his own house.

Jeremiah had faithfully declared God’s words, and at this time, God faithfully fulfilled His promise to Jeremiah (Jeremiah 15:11). The false prophets had said destruction was not coming and were destroyed when it arrived. Jeremiah had declared the pending judgment, and when it came, he was delivered.

Verse 15 begins the message Jeremiah gave from God to Ebed-melech. This promise was given while Jeremiah was still in prison, and it fits chronologically after verse 13 of chapter 38, when Ebed-melech had obtained permission from King Zedekiah to deliver Jeremiah from the dungeon. Although Ebed-melech had demonstrated great courage in his defense of Jeremiah, he was afraid. Perhaps he feared the Jewish nobility because he had withstood them and helped Jeremiah, or he may have been fearful of being killed by the Chaldeans. God promised Ebed-melech deliverance because he had faith in Him.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - D. The circumstances of the prophet
 - 2. Jeremiah’s experiences during Jerusalem’s fall
 - f. The fall of Jerusalem (39:1-18)
 - (1) The capture of the city (39:1-10)
 - (2) The release of Jeremiah (39:11-14)
 - (3) The reward of Ebed-Melech (39:15-18)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What was the name of the captain of the guard for the Babylonian army?

2. Why do you feel that Nebuchadnezzar decided to treat Jeremiah well?

3. How should we encourage others when we know they are suffering adversity?

CONCLUSION

It’s wonderful to know that as we faithfully serve God, He will look well on us and be our help and strength day by day.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And now, behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which were upon thine hand. If it seem good unto thee to come with me into Babylon, come; and I will look well unto thee: but if it seem ill unto thee to come with me into Babylon, forbear: behold, all the land is before thee: whither it seemeth good and convenient for thee to go, thither go.” (Jeremiah 40:4)

As a young man, Henry Martyn (1781-1812) made a life-changing choice. When he was twenty years old, he won the highest Mathematics award at Cambridge University and was a distinguished student there. In addition, he had great ability with languages. His plan was to practice law, and his future looked promising.

However, Henry lacked a sense of fulfillment. He heard about missionary work in India, and was impacted enough to make a decision to change careers. When he was twenty-four years old, he went to India, where he served as a chaplain and studied languages. Before he passed away six years later, he had translated the New Testament into Persian and Hindi, as well as revising an Arabic translation and completing other Biblical translation work. He had prayed that he could “burn out” for God, and his choice to pour himself into God’s service had far-reaching effects.

In today’s focus verse, Jeremiah was given a choice. The Chaldean commander gave Jeremiah the option of going to Babylon to live, and assured him that he would be well taken care of. This offer included protection, provision, and favorable treatment. However, Jeremiah was also free to stay in Judah along with the poor whom the Babylonians were leaving there. Jeremiah remained in Judah and suffered along with the people who stayed. God had called him to be a prophet to the Jewish people, and he was true to his calling to the end of his life.

Like Henry Martyn and Jeremiah, all of us must make choices. Many of our decisions will not be as life-impacting as the choices these men faced. We will, however, face our own set of circumstances. And our decisions, even small ones, can influence the spiritual walks of both ourselves and others. We can be inspired by those who have faithfully fulfilled God’s calling on their lives. We, too, can choose to follow God and let Him use us as He wills. It’s a decision we will not regret.

BACKGROUND

Today’s text begins a portion of the Book of Jeremiah (chapters 40-45) that recounts what happened to Jeremiah and the remaining people of Judah after Jerusalem fell to Babylon and the majority of the people were carried away as captives. Jeremiah’s release from prison is recorded in both chapters 39 and 40. The text in 39:11-14 tells how Nebuzar-adan (captain of the Chaldean guard) released Jeremiah, and he went to dwell among the people—most likely in Jerusalem. Some Bible scholars believe that when the army was ready to burn Jerusalem, they took any people (including Jeremiah) still left there to Ramah. Situated about five miles to the north of Jerusalem, Ramah was used for organizing the deportation of the captives. When Jeremiah arrived in Ramah with the other captives, he was released again (Jeremiah 40:1).

In verses 2-5 Nebuzar-adan quoted Jeremiah’s prophecies back to him. This instance indicates that the Babylonians were aware of Jeremiah and some of his previous predictions and recommendations to the rulers of Judah, which may be why they gave him preferential treatment. Nebuzar-adan offered Jeremiah the option of going to Babylon or staying in Judah. Jeremiah chose to stay in Judah, and settled in Mizpah, which was north of Jerusalem and close to Ramah. He was given food and a reward.

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, appointed Gedaliah to be the governor of Judah. Gedaliah was from a distinguished family. Ahikam, his father, had some importance during the reigns of Josiah and Jehoiakim (2 Kings 22:12,14) and had helped spare Jeremiah’s life (Jeremiah 26:24). Shaphan, his grandfather, was the scribe for Josiah (2 Kings 22:3,10).

Gedaliah’s assignment included supervising the few Jewish people left in Judah. He was also to maintain order among multiple scattered Jewish military leaders with their bands of soldiers who were active throughout the area. Five of those leaders are named in verse 8. Jewish people who had escaped to neighboring countries returned, and Gedaliah gave them food.

Ishmael, one of the military leaders, was a descendant of David, and he conspired with Baalis, the king of the Ammonites, against Gedaliah. Although Johanan, another of the military leaders, warned Gedaliah of their plans, he refused to believe it. Bible scholars are unsure how long Gedaliah was the governor; some think it may have been approximately five years. Chapter 41 records that the conspiracy to slay Gedaliah was indeed carried out.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - D. The circumstances of the prophet
 - 3. Jeremiah's experiences after Jerusalem's fall
 - a. The choice of Jeremiah (40:1-6)
 - b. The governorship of Gedaliah (40:7-12)
 - c. The rebellion against Babylon
 - (1) The assassination of Gedaliah
 - (a) The plot formed (40:13-16)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did Gedaliah promise the military leaders when they came to him?

2. Why do you think Jeremiah chose to stay in Judah?

3. What are some ways God has let you know that He is paying attention to your needs?

CONCLUSION

With God's help, we can make choices that are pleasing to Him.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Ishmael the son of Nethaniah went forth from Mizpah to meet them, weeping all along as he went: and it came to pass, as he met them, he said unto them, Come to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam. And it was so, when they came into the midst of the city, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah slew them, and cast them into the midst of the pit, he, and the men that were with him.” (Jeremiah 41:6-7)

Walter and Lizzy Frymire were busy serving God. At sixty-five years old, Walter was retired and a volunteer worker in the printing plant of the Apostolic Faith Church in Portland, Oregon. He discovered that it was his niche in life; he loved helping to publish Gospel literature. Lizzy was active in distributing that literature as she ministered to others through hospital and nursing home visitations.

In October of 1951, the Frymires took a trip to visit their four sons and two daughters who lived in Southern Oregon and California. After visiting all these families, one Saturday they started northward home. The highway was a two-lane road, and along the way, all the northbound traffic was stopped because of a vehicle breakdown. The driver behind the Frymires did not realize that traffic was stopped and he rear-ended them, knocking their car into the oncoming lane. The southbound traffic was moving quickly, and the Frymire car was thrust in front of a truck. The truck driver had no time to stop, and Walter and Lizzy were both killed.

None of us knows when we will be called into eternity. In today's text, seventy Jewish men who were traveling toward the destroyed city of Jerusalem were murdered. They were probably going to worship where the Temple had been located, and had no thought that their lives would be taken that day.

We need to be prepared to enter eternity because it could happen quickly to any one of us. This does not have to be a fearful thought. If we know that God has forgiven our sins and we are ready to meet Him, we can trust Him to regulate the exact moment our summons will come. We can look forward to seeing the Lord face to face. We just need to be ready!

BACKGROUND

This chapter recounts Ishmael's treacherous assassination of Gedaliah, the Jewish governor in Mizpah. Ishmael was a royal descendant of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah. Possibly envious that he had not been

chosen as governor, or incensed by Gedaliah's order for the remnant of Judah to submit to Babylonian rule, he conspired with the king of the Ammonites to assassinate Gedaliah. Although Gedaliah had been warned by Johanan and others (Jeremiah 40:13-14) that there was a plot against his life, he did not believe that Ishmael was capable of such an act of treachery.

In Jeremiah's time, eating a meal together was a custom that symbolized the assurance of friendship and loyalty to one another. However, Ishmael used his unsuspecting host's hospitality as an opportunity to ambush Gedaliah, as well as the Jews, Chaldeans, and soldiers who were with him.

After concealing Gedaliah's death for two days, Ishmael confronted eighty men who were passing by Mizpah on their way to Jerusalem. Their shaven beards and rent clothing signified that they were mourning, possibly due to the destruction of their beloved Temple. In mockery, Ishmael emulated their weeping and persuaded them to turn aside into Mizpah to meet with Gedaliah. Once they were inside Mizpah, Ishmael brutally murdered seventy of them, only sparing the other ten when they offered to lead him to their stores of food supplies. Although it is unclear what Ishmael's motive for murder was, it may have been robbery. Ishmael threw the bodies of the slain men into a cistern that King Asa had dug three hundred years earlier during a crisis with Baasha, king of Israel.

Ishmael then seized the remaining inhabitants of Mizpah with the intention of taking them to the land of the Ammonites. However, when Johanan and the other chieftains heard of Ishmael's evil deeds, they gathered their forces and met Ishmael by a large pool of water located in Gibeon, around five miles northwest of Jerusalem. The captives from Mizpah were relieved to see Johanan and his armies, but Ishmael, realizing that he was about to be defeated, managed to escape to the Ammonites, along with eight of his men.

Johanan and the other clan leaders chose not to return to Mizpah for fear that the Babylonians would believe they were involved in the assassination of Gedaliah. They took the people they had rescued from Ishmael to Chimham, located close to Bethlehem, and made plans to travel into Egypt.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - D. The circumstances of the prophet
 - 3. Jeremiah's experiences after Jerusalem's fall

-
-
-
-
-
-

[illegible]

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“That the LORD thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do.” (Jeremiah 42:3)

When we are uncertain about a course of action, seeking advice from a knowledgeable source can be to our advantage. Of course, the advice we receive will only benefit us if we follow through on it!

Thirty years ago, I was doing some work in a town about two-and-a-half hours away from where I live. When I was ready to head for home, a winter storm was already in progress. Since the drive was a long one in the best of weather, I felt I should talk to the highway snow-clearing supervisor to find out whether he thought driving that route was wise given the current weather conditions. He advised me to stay where I was and wait out the storm. However, having traveled that road other times in similar conditions, I decided to leave for home anyway.

I set out, but after driving for about twenty miles, suddenly the highway was totally obscured by the blowing snow—it was a complete whiteout! Unable to see where I was heading, the car veered off the road and came to a stop in the ditch. I was stuck!

Thankfully, after I had waited for some time, another vehicle came by and the driver offered assistance. I was able to return to the town where I had been working and obtain the services of a tow-truck. I spent the rest of the day getting back to where I had started. How many times during those hours I wished I had heeded the advice of the supervisor!

In this passage the remnant in Judah stood at a crossroads. Their nation had been decimated by Babylon and their governor had been assassinated. To the south lay the nation of Egypt where they believed they could find a stable society to protect them from the Babylonian army. In today's text, the leaders of the people sought for advice from Jeremiah the prophet, but his answer was not what the people wanted to hear. They had placed all their hope in Egypt, but God said that they should stay in Judah, where He would take care of them and grant them mercy. If they persisted in their desire to go to Egypt, they would all perish one way or another.

We, too, will face times of decision in our lives—occasions when we are not sure what direction to take. We can turn to God for help, but we want to be careful that we do not already have our minds made up as to what we want to do! It is a mistake to

ask for God's guidance with no intention of following it. No matter how uncertain our circumstances may seem at the time, it is always safest to obey God.

BACKGROUND

In chapter 42 the captains and remnant of Judah pled with Jeremiah to seek God's counsel regarding whether they should go to Egypt. God's response was for them to remain in Judah or face certain judgment. Chapter 43 summarizes the captains' rejection of God's command and their decision to take the remnant of Judah into Egypt.

It seems Jeremiah was dwelling with Johanan and the remnant of Judah near Bethlehem. Seemingly uncertain about what course of action to take, Johanan, the captains, and the people approached Jeremiah and entreated him to pray for God's direction on their behalf. Possibly feeling they had forfeited their right to approach God personally, the Jews referenced Him as Jeremiah's God. When Jeremiah assured them that he would ask for God's counsel, the people vowed that they would be obedient to whatever God said.

After ten days of waiting on God, Jeremiah received an answer and called together the captains and the people. God assured the Jews that they should not fear repercussions from the king of Babylon. He said if they would remain in the land of Judah, He would cause Nebuchadnezzar to show mercy and allow them to return to their own land. God also said He would build up the inhabitants of Judah and no longer send them into captivity. God's statement, "For I repent me of the evil that I have done unto you" (42:10), was not an expression of sorrow for the judgments He had executed on Judah, but an expression of His willingness to relent on any further retribution if Judah would be obedient to Him.

Jeremiah told the people that if they chose to dwell in Egypt rather than Judah because they believed they would be free from famine and war, the reality was that the calamities they had thought to escape in Judah would befall them in Egypt. God said He would pour out His wrath on the Jews who relocated to Egypt just as He had on the inhabitants of Jerusalem when they had ignored His warnings. The word *execration* in 42:18 meant "something detested or cursed," and God stated that in addition to being abhorred, the Jews in Egypt (except for a few who would escape, see Jeremiah 44:14) would never have the opportunity to see their beloved Judah again.

Jeremiah charged his people with being insincere in their avowal that if he would pray for them, they

would do whatever God said. He told them that he had declared unto them all the counsel that God had given him, and their disobedience would bring certain death by the sword, famine, or pestilence in the land of Egypt.

In verse two of chapter 43, the captains accused Jeremiah of not being truthful in what the Lord had told him. They even falsely blamed Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe, for influencing Jeremiah against them with the intention of delivering them into the hands of the Babylonians. In defiance of God's command to remain in the land of Judah, Johanan and the captains convinced the entire remnant of Judah to go into Egypt, and they traveled to Tahpanhes, a fortress city on Egypt's northern border.

While living in Tahpanhes, Jeremiah was instructed by God to take large stones and, in the sight of all the men of Judah, hide them in the mortar of the brickwork at the entrance to Pharaoh's house. This was not the royal palace of Pharaoh, but apparently a residence he used when visiting Tahpanhes. God told Jeremiah to inform the Jews that Nebuchadnezzar, under God's direction, would one day besiege Egypt and set up his throne in that same location. Dispelling any sense of security the Jews may have felt in Egypt, Jeremiah warned that during Nebuchadnezzar's conquest, many would die or be taken into captivity. Jeremiah also emphasized that the gods of Egypt would be useless in offering assistance and would be utterly destroyed.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - D. The circumstances of the prophet
 - 3. Jeremiah's experiences after Jerusalem's fall
 - d. The migration into Egypt (42:1 — 43:7)
 - (1) The request for guidance (42:1-6)
 - (2) The rejection of guidance (42:7 — 43:7)
 - (a) The admonition to remain in the land (42:7-12)
 - (b) The warning of departure to Egypt (42:13-22)
 - (c) The warning refused (43:1-7)
 - e. The prophecy against Egypt (43:8-13)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How long did Jeremiah wait before responding to the people with an answer from God?

2. Why do you think the people of Judah asked for advice and then went their own way, in spite of what the prophet told them to do?

3. What should our response be to the Word of God?

CONCLUSION

As we ask God for guidance in the decisions we face in life, let us be sure that we follow through in obedience!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from the wickedness, to burn no incense unto other gods.” (Jeremiah 44:4-5)

Harry Truman, the eighty-four-year-old owner of Mount St. Helen’s Lodge in the State of Washington, had lived on the north base of the mountain for over fifty years. There had been signs of volcanic activity, and in March of 1980, “his mountain,” as he liked to call it, began to shake more violently and frequently. Experts predicted a major eruption would occur soon and instructed residents in the area to leave.

Harry decided to stick it out. As the earthquakes and minor eruptions increased, news reporters came to interview him, documenting his determination not to leave the mountain. This publicity made him a well-known figure, and people everywhere became alarmed about his safety. Many wrote to him warning him with concern, urging him to leave while there was still time. A class of schoolchildren from Clear Lake Elementary near Salem, Oregon, sent him letters which touched him deeply. But he said that the mountain would never hurt him, and continued to refuse repeated invitations of transportation to safety.

Finally, he was told by the local sheriff to evacuate immediately, but Harry locked his door and settled down to wait it out. When the searing blast of Mount St. Helens’ volcanic eruption came at three hundred miles per hour on May 18, 1980, one scientist said Mr. Truman probably only had time to turn his head before his life was over. He “hearkened not”—he did not heed the warnings given—and so he perished.

Mr. Truman’s determination to stay on the mountain was not wicked, but his choice resulted in his death. In our focus verses, Jeremiah referenced the many warnings given to the people of Judah by God’s servants. They were warned to leave their sin of idolatry so their lives could be saved. Yet even though this offer of grace was given many times, the people continued in their sins, and eventually those choices led to their own deaths.

People today have received warnings as well—admonition regarding the vital necessity of turning to God in repentance for sins, the need to live holy lives in accordance with the Word of God, and the penalty for going their own way and ignoring the proffered

mercy of God. We can learn from the tragedies of Mr. Truman and the people of Judah, and determine to “hearken.” It pays to heed the warnings of God’s Word!

BACKGROUND

Chapter 44 contains Jeremiah’s last recorded message to his people, the Jewish remnant, and chapter 45 is a short message to Jeremiah’s scribe, Baruch.

When the few remaining Jews in Judah traveled to Egypt, they joined other Hebrew refugees who were already settled in various areas of that land. Once there, these people were again worshiping idols and heathen gods. Jeremiah reminded them that because of their idolatry, God had destroyed their land, Jerusalem, and the Temple. He also reminded them of all the prophets who had given warnings of what would happen if they continued to worship idols that could not hear or see, and that many had been killed because they would not heed. Yet at this point, those who had survived were repeating the same sins they had committed in Judah. They told Jeremiah that everything had gone well with them in Judah until King Josiah had made them give up idol worship, when their situation worsened. They felt they were better off worshiping idols.

Jeremiah told them that because of their continuing idolatry they would be seriously punished. Many of them would die by the sword, by famine, and by perils. He specifically mentioned the women who were active in worshiping the Queen of Heaven. This angered the Jews, and they refused to hear him. The people had rejected the warnings sent by God’s servants for over forty years. To the very end, they refused God’s offer of forgiveness and salvation. Therefore, Jeremiah’s last words to them stated that God would “watch over them for evil.” Of these refugees who sought safety in Egypt, only a few fugitives would ever return to their homeland.

Chapter 45 contains Jeremiah’s admonition to Baruch, whose name means “blessed.” This man served Jeremiah as a scribe and a personal secretary, and as such, he was significantly impacted by the ministry of Jeremiah.

The message of this chapter was given to Baruch during the reign of Jehoiakim, and chronologically fits with chapter 36. However, it was a personal communication and therefore was written separately from the public discourses. Baruch is thought to have recorded the last events of Jeremiah’s life, and putting this record with them seemed appropriate.

Baruch was a grandson of Maaseiah, who governed Jerusalem when Josiah was king (2 Chronicles 34:8). Since his family had some importance, Baruch may have had hopes of attaining a prominent position. Instead, by being a scribe to Jeremiah, he suffered and even was in life-threatening circumstances at times. He expressed his discouragement when he said, “Woe is me now!”

Through Jeremiah, God told Baruch not to build his hopes on a future in Judah because everything there would be destroyed, and He warned Baruch not to seek great things for himself. However, God did also extend encouragement, saying that Baruch’s life would be spared.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah
 - D. The circumstances of the prophet
 - 3. Jeremiah’s experiences after Jerusalem’s fall
 - f. The message to the Jews in Egypt (44:1-30)
 - (1) The rebuke of their sins (44:1-10)
 - (2) The declaration of judgment (44:11-14)
 - (3) The rejection of the people (44:15-19)
 - (4) The restatement of judgment (44:20-30)
 - g. The message to Baruch (45:1-5)
 - (1) Baruch’s complaint (45:1-3)
 - (2) Baruch’s comfort (45:4-5)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. How did the men whose wives burned incense to other gods answer Jeremiah?

2. Why do you think the people of Judah continued to resist Jeremiah’s admonitions, even though they had already begun to experience the correction of God?

3. What are some ways the people of the world today are like the remnant of Judah when it comes to prophetic Biblical warnings?

CONCLUSION

Unheeded warnings lead to serious consequences. Let’s make sure that we “hearken” to what the Lord is saying to us and follow through in obedience.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the LORD: for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished.” (Jeremiah 46:28)

Even though we serve a God of mercy, there are consequences for sin. One brother in our church congregation testifies that he had a price to pay after his conversion.

“Shortly after getting saved,” he relates, “I read a tract on restitution and realized that I needed to clear up some things in my past. I began visiting stores to pay for things I had stolen, and I wrote letters to companies I had defrauded. The amount of money I owed was enormous, but over a number of years, God helped me make every restitution that He laid on my heart until my conscience was clear.

“The biggest trial facing me was jail time. Here, again, God intervened. A Christian man wrote a letter to the judge who was going to sentence me. In that letter, he quoted the verse, ‘If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new’ (2 Corinthians 5:17). The judge was moved by the Word of God. He told me that he could sentence me to ten years for the crime I had committed, but that he would give me only one year. I ended up serving just five months and nineteen days.

“Every day, in the correctional institution, God was with me. He kept me, even though my old life was all around me. I could have fallen back into sin, but His power was with me. Every morning, I would get up and kneel by my bed to pray, and prayer saw me through. God worked another miracle in allowing me to keep my job. I was released every day to go to work. This enabled me to start paying back what I owed.”

This brother had to face the consequences of his former life, and he did. In spite of difficult circumstances, God preserved him. His problems did not develop in one day and they were not resolved in one day, but he testifies, “God was with me every step.”

Like this man, the Jews were facing the consequences of their sins. Jeremiah had warned them that they would endure many years of captivity as divine correction for their rebellion against God. However, in today’s focus verse, the prophet comforted them with

the assurance that although God would punish them in measure, He would extend mercy and preserve a remnant. The fact that the Jews have remained a distinct people, while most of the nations around them long ago ceased to have any separate and visible existence, is proof that God kept His promise.

None of us have received what we deserve—God has extended grace to each one of us even though we may have faced some consequences for sin. How grateful we should be that we serve a God of mercy and compassion!

BACKGROUND

Chapters 46-51 are a separate section of the Book of Jeremiah that predict the judgments of the nations that surrounded Judah. Chronologically these chapters fit near chapter 25. However, placement there would interrupt the flow of the dialog directed to Judah, so they are located toward the last of the book. Chapter 46 deals with Egypt, and chapter 47 with Philistia. Jeremiah 46:1 is an introduction to the section.

The message to the Egyptians in chapter 46 has two parts that were written as poems. The first in verses 2-12 describes Babylon’s victory over Egypt at Carchemish. This battle in 605 B.C. was decisive because it changed who controlled the ancient East. Pharaoh-necho was a powerful leader, and verses 3-6 give a vivid account of Egypt’s preparation for battle and then its defeat. Verses 7-12 are a different picture of the same battle. The prophet compared Egypt’s armies, including its Ethiopian, Libyan, and Lydian soldiers, to the Nile River and its irrigation canals. At flood stage, water covered the land. Although Egypt’s forces were many, God ordained that they would be defeated by Babylon at the Euphrates River. The healing balm, or medicine, of Gilead would not bring recovery.

The second poem (verses 13-26) tells how King Nebuchadnezzar would destroy the land of Egypt. Some scholars believe this portion was written quite a time after the first one. Migdol, Noph, and Tahpanhes were cities on the border of Egypt, and the call was for them to be prepared for battle. But they would not be able to stand because the Lord would fight against them. “Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise” (verse 17) showed the Egyptians’ disrespect for their leader, calling him a loud mouth. In verse 20, the comparison of Egypt to a “fair heifer” may be a reference to its god Isis, which the people depicted as a beautiful cow. “Destruction” in the same verse could have meant a gadfly which stung cattle and caused them to run here

and there. Egypt would be overcome and ruined, but verse 26 indicated it would one day be rebuilt.

The last two verses of chapter 46 contain the promise to the Jewish people that God would not completely destroy them, although He would punish them “in measure.”

Chapter 47 gives a graphic description of the defeat of the Philistines, along with Tyre and Sidon (Tyrus and Zidon), two Phoenician seacoast cities. The enemy would be so numerous and strong that it would come like an “overflowing flood.” The fathers would be terrified and worn out, and they would desert their children. There would be much mourning and a cry for God to stop His judgment.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

III. The pronouncement of judgment against the nations

- A. Against Egypt (46:1-28)
 - 1. The defeat at Carchemish (46:1-12)
 - 2. The invasion by Nebuchadnezzar (46:13-26)
 - a. The destruction predicted (46:13-25)
 - b. The restoration foretold (46:26)
 - 3. The promise of comfort for Israel (46:27-28)
- B. Against Philistia (47:1-7)
 - 1. The destruction of Philistia (47:1-4)
 - 2. The lament for the Philistines (47:5-7)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. In this passage, what nation was described as coming up like a flood?

2. Do you think God would have stopped or postponed judgment against Egypt and Philistia if they had repented? Why?

3. What are some of the ways God encourages you in times of trial?

CONCLUSION

Sin has consequences, but how grateful we should be that God upholds us with mercy and compassion, even as we deal with those consequences.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel their confidence.” (Jeremiah 48:13)

Isobel Kuhn was a missionary in the mountains of China. Often she and her husband traveled over steep, narrow trails along the edges of cliffs. These had to be traversed in single file, and any slip could mean instant disaster. The proper way for women to travel was by a mountain chair, but Isobel discovered on her first “ride” that this demanded courage, especially on slippery paths. The chair was carried by two men, one in front and another in back. When the incline was especially steep, the chair would tilt backward. As they went along, the men would grunt and feel for a secure place to put their feet. If the narrow trail turned a corner, the chair swung out over the precipice. When she was new to this method of mountain travel, Isobel would not allow herself to look down or think about the result if one of the men lost his footing.

Through the years that Isobel ministered in China, she made countless trips up and down many mountainsides—sometimes riding a mule, sometimes in the mountain chair, sometimes walking. Always there was the issue of trust—trust in those carrying her or those guiding the mule, trust in the natives leading them, and trust in God to keep them safe. It was vital to their survival that they not misplace their trust.¹

The people of Moab who were addressed in today’s chapter had misplaced their trust. In their idolatry, they trusted in their god Chemosh. The focus verse predicted that they would be ashamed of their god because, of course, he would be unable to deliver them from their enemies. This verse also refers to Bethel, where years before, Jeroboam had made a golden calf so the people of the Northern Kingdom could worship there instead of going to the Temple in Jerusalem. Israel, too, had been “ashamed” and had gone into captivity because their idol was no help.

Today, we must be certain that we are not misplacing our trust. Spiritually, this is even more important than trusting our lives to someone carrying a chair over a mountain trail. We want to be sure that our souls are trusting in God. This means more than just knowing about Him or saying we believe in Him. Our eternal destiny is dependent upon giving Him complete control of our lives. If we do this, He is trustworthy and will see us through all the difficult trails of life and into Heaven.

BACKGROUND

Among the judgments that Jeremiah prophesied against various nations, this chapter deals with Moab. Moab was a small country lying to the east of the Dead Sea.

The Moabites descended from Lot and had influenced the Jewish people toward idolatry. Moab had aligned with Nebuchadnezzar in raiding Judah, but later Babylon conquered the Moabites. The chapter is written in poetry, with the names of many of Moab’s cities interwoven.

In verses 1-10 the prophet described how Moab would be destroyed. Nebo and Kiriathaim were cities that had been possessed by the Jewish people but later were taken by Moab. “The going up of Luhith” and “the going down of Horonaim” referred to the roads that went to these cities. Chemosh was the primary god of this nation. It was common for armies to carry their idols to battle with them, and then the victorious army would take those idols home with them, and Jeremiah prophesied that “Chemosh shall go forth into captivity.” The phrase “give wings unto Moab” meant that anyone who wanted to escape the coming destruction would need to flee quickly, and a curse was placed on the conquerors if they refrained from completely destroying the nation.

This land was well known for its vineyards, and Jeremiah used wine as an illustration of what would happen to Moab (verses 11-12). Wine is allowed to rest (ferment) in order to enhance its flavor. However, if it sits too long on the sediment at the bottom (lees), it becomes bitter, so it needs to be poured from one container to another. As a country, Moab had been invaded and paid tribute, but it had not been destroyed or taken into captivity. Consequently, the people were used to being prosperous and at ease. They had deteriorated morally, and destruction was coming—their “bottles” would be broken.

The people of Moab had magnified themselves against the Lord (verse 26), rejoiced when Judah suffered (verse 27), and were “exceeding proud” (verse 29). Jeremiah prophesied of the judgment that would come upon them. Their beautiful vineyards would be destroyed, their orchards would not have fruit, and mourning would replace joy. The enemy would come like an eagle (verse 40) and no one would escape death or captivity.

Yet verse 47 holds out a little hope. God said He would one day “bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days.”

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

III. The pronouncement of judgment against the nations

C. Against Moab (48:1-47)

1. The destruction of Moab (48:1-10)
2. The departure of Moab's glory (48:11-25)
3. The description of Moab's pride (48:26-35)
4. The dirge for Moab (48:36-38)
5. The devastation of Moab (48:39-46)
6. The restoration of Moab promised (48:47)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did Jeremiah say would be some of the signs that the people of Moab would mourn?

2. Why do you think the Moabites trusted another god besides the Lord?

3. What will happen to people today who put their spiritual trust in someone or something besides God?

CONCLUSION

Where is your trust? God is fully reliable and will never fail His people.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thine heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the LORD.” (Jeremiah 49:16)

We appreciate the fact that public prayer and national days of prayer have a long-standing history in the United States. In 1775, the Continental Congress asked the colonies to pray for wisdom in forming a nation, and since then, calling upon God for help has been an integral part of the national heritage.

Perhaps one of the most notable calls to prayer was that of President Abraham Lincoln, given at a time when the United States was embroiled in the Civil War. On March 30, 1863, Lincoln proclaimed a day of National Humiliation, Fasting, and Prayer. His proclamation said that pride was the cause of the terrible struggle the nation was enduring. It said in part: “We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven; we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us.”

President Lincoln rightly acknowledged that the sovereign God of the universe is the One who blesses and upholds the nations, according to His will. Many nations throughout the ages of time have failed to recognize this important truth and have paid a tragic price for that failure. In today’s focus verse, the Prophet Jeremiah pronounced that Edom, a nation south of Judah, was destined to be brought down because of the pride of her heart. She would become “a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse” (verse 13), and her cities would be a wasteland forever. What a terrible recompense for her prideful rebellion against God!

Where are the nations of the earth putting their trust today? News reports are laced with references to missile defense plans, strategic allies, and military

preparations. However, there is no foolproof method for preserving national security except a humble and complete reliance upon God.

As we study the doom pronounced upon the nations surrounding Judah, we should purpose to pray for our nations and our leaders. Let us ask God to help them never become, in the words of President Lincoln, “too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us.” May God help us all learn a lesson from Edom!

BACKGROUND

Today’s text gives the judgments on Ammon and Edom. Verses 1-6 address Ammon, whose people descended from Lot and lived to the east of the Jordan River. Throughout their history, the Ammonites took land that belonged to the Hebrews. An example was when the Northern Kingdom of Israel was taken into captivity and the Ammonites took possession of Gad (verse 1). The Ammonites trusted in their “treasures,” including their productive fields. But their god would not be able to deliver them. “For their king shall go into captivity” referred to their god Milcom, also called Molech, to which they sacrificed children. The capital, Rabbah, would be burned, and chaos would take place among them.

Verses 7-22 deal with the people of Edom, who were descendants of Esau and lived south of Judah. Having long held animosity toward the Hebrew people, the Edomites aided the Chaldeans in the siege of Jerusalem and exulted when the city fell. God had the prophet utter strong words of judgment. Teman was a city in the northern part of the country, and its people were famous for having wisdom. (Job’s counselor, Eliphaz, was from Teman.) Dedan, a city on the border of Edom, was recognized for its commerce. Bozrah was Edom’s capital.

The prophet said the whole of the country would be defenseless, every hiding place discovered, and every person killed or taken into captivity (verses 9-10). It would be like gathering grapes without leaving even one behind. The Edomites had been proud (verse 16). They had built high in the mountains where they could easily defend themselves, but they would be destroyed as Sodom and Gomorrah had been. At their downfall, the earth would shake and their cry would be heard at the Red Sea (verse 21). Like a lion or an eagle, Nebuchadnezzar would come upon the Edomites because he was chosen by God to obliterate them. No hope of restoration was given.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- III. The pronouncement of judgment against the nations
 - D. Against Ammon (49:1-6)
 - 1. The destruction of Ammon (49:1-5)
 - 2. The restoration of Ammon (49:6)
 - E. Against Edom (49:7-22)
 - 1. The destruction of Edom (49:7-13)
 - 2. The cause of destruction (49:14-17)
 - 3. The completeness of destruction (49:18-22)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What did the prophet instruct the daughters of Rabbah to do?

2. What might be some warning signs that pride is ruling in a nation?

3. What is our responsibility in terms of influencing the spiritual direction of our own nation?

CONCLUSION

God controls the destiny of nations, and He will bring judgment upon those nations who fail to acknowledge and honor Him.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“Flee, get you far off, dwell deep, O ye inhabitants of Hazor, saith the LORD; for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath taken counsel against you, and hath conceived a purpose against you.”
(Jeremiah 49:30)**

On Sunday, December 7, 1941, the Japanese launched a surprise attack against the United States military forces stationed at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The attacking planes came in two waves; the first hit its target at 7:53 a.m., the second at 8:55. By 9:55 it was all over. As smoke arose from that scene of terrible devastation, the staggering truth emerged: the Japanese attack resulted in the deaths of 2,403 servicemen, destroyed 188 planes, and damaged or destroyed eight battleships, decimating the Pacific Fleet.

Many historians suggest that the attack—which precipitated the entry of the United States into World War II—succeeded because of a failure to pay attention to warning signs. Radar had picked up incoming Japanese planes, and this was reported to the officer on watch at the central station with the terse statement, “many planes.” However, that very morning, a flight of American B17s was due in from the same direction and the officer assumed these were the planes the radar was picking up. Without confirming the number of planes, he told the radar operator not to worry about it.

This error, along with other missed signals that an attack was imminent, may have resulted from a seemingly pervasive mindset among the United States Army and Navy high commands that Japan would not and could not attack the fortified island of Oahu. What a tragic misconception!

In our focus verse, the Prophet Jeremiah issued a warning to the inhabitants of Hazor, a nomadic people living in the area east of Judah. Nebuchadnezzar and the powerful armies of Babylon were about to sweep over them in a destructive wave. They were told to flee the coming calamity.

Like the officers at Pearl Harbor and the people of Hazor, we have also received warnings, and our decision to heed or not to heed will have momentous consequences. Through God’s Word we are cautioned that the devil’s intent is to utterly destroy us, but we can heed the warnings God has given us. We can follow God’s Word, take appropriate action, and be protected from Satan’s annihilation. Or we can ignore the warnings and reap the consequences. It’s up to us!

BACKGROUND

Today’s text continues the prophecies about the judgment of the nations, addressing Damascus, Kedar and Hazor, and Elam.

Verses 23-27 were directed to Syria, of which Damascus was the major city. Three trade routes intersected there, and at one time it was a beautiful place. Hamath was located on the Orontes River about one-hundred-ten miles north of Damascus. Arpad was further northward about ninety-five miles and had a significant fortress. Instead of being lovely and grand, Damascus would be “feeble” and filled with fear and death. In time, the Assyrians and also the Chaldeans conquered Damascus.

Kedar and Hazor are addressed in verses 28-33. These were Arabian tribes who lived in the desert east of Judah. Kedar was a son of Ishmael, and his descendants were nomadic. They were adept in archery. Hazor may have referred to semi-nomadic tribes that built villages in the desert. The phrase “in the utmost corners” meant the men of these tribes shaved off the hair at their temples to honor their gods. These were wealthy people with many cattle, so the potential booty was attractive to Nebuchadnezzar. They were warned that he would attack them and there would be great fear, so they should flee. Hazor would be a desolation and no one would live there.

Verses 34-39 deal with Elam, a country located to the east of Babylon. Elam had Persia to its east and was north of the Persian Gulf. Its capital, Susa, was over seven hundred miles away from Jerusalem, where Jeremiah was when he gave this prophecy during Zedekiah’s reign. The Elamites were also known for excellence in archery, but that would not save them. God was indicating that He is sovereign over all nations of the world, and none would stand once judgment had been declared against them. Some Bible scholars believe that some of the scattered Elamites gathered to become a part of the Persian Empire.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- III. The pronouncement of judgment against the nations
 - F. Against Damascus (49:23-27)
 - G. Against Kedar and Hazor (49:28-33)
 - 1. The destruction of Kedar (49:28-29)
 - 2. The destruction of Hazor (49:30-33)
 - H. Against Elam (49:34-39)
 - 1. The destruction of Elam (49:34-38)
 - 2. The restoration of Elam (49:39)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What advice given in verse 30 could indicate the possibility of hope?

2. What are some current policies or attitudes of nations that are in violation of God's laws? Given the judgment pronounced in today's text, what do you think will be the result for nations in our day?

3. What steps can you take to assure that you are heeding the warnings God gives you, and that you are pursuing His will?

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

We can learn from history. By paying attention to how things went wrong in the past when warnings were not heeded, we can avoid having similar destructive outcomes. May we resolve to follow God and pay serious attention to His guidance and warnings!

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting-place.” (Jeremiah 50:6)

Sheep have some interesting habits related to rest. Christian author Phillip Keller, who wrote a classic book about Christ as the Good Shepherd, says, “The strange thing about sheep is that because of their very make-up it is almost impossible for them to be made to lie down unless four requirements are met . . . To be at rest there must be a definite sense of freedom from fear, tension, aggravations, and hunger.”¹ When sheep refuse to lie down because of the conditions around them, it is the shepherd who remedies the conditions, thus providing a resting place.

The lost sheep of Judah had allowed themselves to be led away from their resting place in the Lord by false shepherds—the unrighteous leaders of Israel and Judah, who had taken the people into rebellion and idolatry. While there are several Hebrew words translated into English as *rest*, the word translated *restingplace* in our focus verse is one which is almost exclusively used to describe the activity of sheep. It literally means “a place of lying down or repose.” The people of Israel and Judah had forgotten the true source of rest, protection, and direction, and had turned to substitutes which could not provide what they needed. As a result, they had no place of repose or security—they were spiritually lost and in desperate straits.

Today, God invites each one of us to make Him our resting place. He offers peace in a world torn by strife and turmoil. He promises that He will order our steps, uphold us with everlasting arms, and stay by our side. He will protect us from evil, shield us from danger, and fight our battles. As our Shepherd, the Lord will restore our souls, bind up our wounds, and renew our strength. What rest for our souls is found in the precious assurances He gives us!

Let us learn a lesson from the tragic mistake of Israel and Judah, and purpose to stay close to our Shepherd!

BACKGROUND

In this chapter and the next, Jeremiah imparted a long oracle predicting the devastation of Babylon and the land of the Chaldeans. Although Babylon had

fulfilled God’s purpose in punishing Judah, God had slated it for total destruction because of its wickedness and idolatry. Some commentators suggest that the prophecies in this chapter are not listed in sequential order and were written at different times, with the first oracle being written around the fourth year of King Zedekiah’s reign. One noteworthy characteristic of this chapter is that nearly all passages of doom concerning Babylon are followed by heartening words for the Jewish captives.

In verse 2, *Bel* meant “lord” and *Merodach* was the Hebrew spelling of “Marduk,” the sun-god and chief god of the Babylonians. Jeremiah stated that all the pagan idols of the Chaldeans would be broken in pieces and defeated. Verse 3 notes that Babylon’s vanquisher would come out of the north, a reference to the allied armies of the Medes and Persians who would ultimately conquer Babylon.

In verses 4-10, Jeremiah declared that at the time of Babylon’s destruction, captives from Israel and Judah would seek the Lord, desiring to renew their broken covenant with Him. Jeremiah compared the exiled Hebrews to sheep without a shepherd, and said that their leaders (shepherds) had led them astray. Jeremiah also accused Judah’s destroyers of justifying their actions because Judah had sinned against the Lord. He admonished the Jewish captives to be as male goats leading the flock and flee Babylon before the great nations from the north plundered and destroyed it.

Because the people of Babylon had gloated in their victory over Judah (verses 11-14), God said they would become least among the nations and their land would become a parched desert, completely uninhabitable. The surrounding nations would look in astonishment at how the affluent Babylon had suddenly ceased to exist. God summoned the armies from the north to attack Babylon and destroy it just as Babylon had devastated Judah (verses 14-16). Often conquering nations would spare the agriculturists, but in this case they would also be targeted and flee for fear.

In verses 17-20, God promised the Jews that He would destroy Babylon just as He had previously destroyed Assyria. Although the Jews had been as scattered sheep, God said He would bring them back to their native land. God also stated that He would pardon the sins of the remnant of Jews who would return to the land.

In verses 21-27, God directed the northern enemies of Babylon to attack. *Merathaim* meant “double rebellion” and may have been a symbolic name for

Babylon, alluding that it was more rebellious than other nations. Although Pekod was probably a literal place in Babylon, many Bible scholars believe this word allegorically referred to “punishment” or “visitation,” denoting that the time of Babylon’s deserved punishment had come. King Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army had been like a powerful destructive “hammer” assailing the whole earth, but they would now become as desolation among the nations. Verse 24 indicates that the attack on Babylon would catch them unaware.

In verse 28, Jeremiah said that those who escaped from Babylon would declare in Jerusalem (Zion) that God had avenged Nebuchadnezzar’s destruction of the Temple. The word translated *proud* in verse 31 was the Hebrew word *zadown* and meant “insolent, presumptuous, and arrogant.” God said Babylon’s incessant pride would cause its ultimate destruction. God reminded the Jewish exiles that although both Israel and Judah had been held captive by their enemies, their Redeemer would prevail and give the Jews rest in their own land (verse 34).

Jeremiah declared that the sword would fall upon all the inhabitants of Babylon, regardless of their class. The “liars” in verse 36 probably alluded to the astrologers or diviners, and “mingled people” could have been a reference to the foreign troops or inhabitants. The land would also suffer a severe drought and would no longer be inhabitable, and only wild beasts would dwell there.

Jeremiah concluded the chapter with a detailed description of the viciousness of the impending attack against Babylon, and stated that for fear of the attackers, the king would become feeble and offer no resistance. God declared His intention to destroy the Chaldeans, and signified that nothing could thwart His plans. When Babylon’s destruction came, the whole world would know that God was in control.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- III. The pronouncement of judgment against the nations
 - I. Against Babylon
 - 1. The description of Babylon’s fall (50:1-16)
 - 2. The notice of Israel’s restoration (50:17-20)
 - 3. The description of Babylon’s desolation (50:21-32)
 - 4. The promise of Israel’s redemption (50:33-40)
 - 5. The destruction from the north (50:41-46)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. From what direction would the assembly of nations come against Babylon?

2. After being used as an instrument of God to judge Judah, why do you think this judgment was pronounced against Babylon?

3. How can we, as followers of God, avoid the heart-aches experienced by both Judah and Babylon?

CONCLUSION

Let us not forget that we are called and privileged to live within the arms of God’s rest.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding.” (Jeremiah 51:15)

Creation speaks of the Creator, but we must be receptive to discern the message. Edna was one who heard God speak to her heart through the splendor of His creation.

Edna had been saved as a child, but she let the love of God slip out of her life. She married and had children, and their family was living in Bozeman, Montana. Montana is called Big Sky Country, and the reason was apparent from their home: they could see mountains out of every window, and the sky was truly lovely. Edna says, “From sunrise to sunset, I could not get away from the fact that the Lord had given His creation such beauty. Many times when my husband was at work and our children were at school or outside, I would kneel and pray, thanking God for my good life, for my family, and for some of the most beautiful sunsets anyone could ever see. I also started praying that the Lord would make a way for me to come back to Him.

“One night we received a call that our son and some of his friends were in a terrible car accident. My husband left for the hospital immediately, but I had to stay home with our younger children. I knelt and asked the Lord to please spare our son’s life, and told Him that I would give Him my heart if He would just intervene. The next morning I called my mother and asked for prayer.

“God answered, and our son’s life was spared. But from that time on, when I looked at God’s creation, I was convicted. It seemed to me that the sky got prettier and the snow whiter. Everywhere there was such beauty, and I knew that I did not deserve it. The more I saw of the beauty God had created, the worse I felt.

“In time, we moved back to Oregon. Then I saw some things happening in my husband’s life that I didn’t like, and I started praying for him. Also, I began reading the Bible. In the spring of 1983, while kneeling in my living room and praying for my husband, the Lord once again showed me my need. I asked Him to forgive me, which He so graciously did. Now I love to look at the sky! When it is exceptionally beautiful, I know the Lord is going to appear at any second.”

Edna heard the voice of the Creator because she was willing to listen. In contrast, the people of Judah and also the Chaldeans of Babylon had rejected the Creator and made their own gods. In today’s text, God, whose infinite power, wisdom, and understanding are clearly apparent in the works of His Hands, is contrasted with the utterly worthless idols worshiped by the Chaldeans.

Has God spoken to your heart through the magnificence of His creation? Let us make sure our hearts are open and receptive to hear Him, however and whenever He speaks to us.

BACKGROUND

Today’s text continues the pronouncements of God’s judgments against Babylon and the Chaldeans.

The chapter begins with the declaration that Babylon’s enemies would come against them like a “destroying wind.” Next the prophet gave a word picture of winnowing grain. In the ancient East, corn or wheat was crushed by animals walking on it or by running a heavy wheel over it. Then it was tossed in the air with a shovel so the wind would blow away the chaff and the grain would fall to the ground.

The word *brigandine* (verse 3) means a coat of mail, but that armor would not be sufficient to protect the Chaldean soldiers. Their nation would be crushed and destroyed because of their sins against God.

Although God had severely punished Israel and Judah for their rebellion, He had not totally forsaken them. He had used Babylon as His tool, but God also promised vengeance on that nation because of its own sins. God’s people would be vindicated. Those who wished to help Babylon would not be able to deliver it (verse 9).

“Thou that dwellest upon many waters” (verse 13), may have referred to Babylon’s location on the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, or the city’s numerous irrigation canals. This phrase also may have referred to the many nations and peoples that Babylon ruled.

The prophet said Babylon’s destruction would come from the Medes (verse 11). The Medes became a notable force about one hundred years before the time of Jeremiah. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon married the granddaughter of Cyaxares (called Darius in the Bible), who was king of the Medes. This helped form an alliance between the Babylonians and the Medes, and together they defeated the Assyrians (who had taken Israel captive). Under Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon took the nation of Judah captive. When Nebuchadnezzar died, the alliance with the Medes

broke down. The Medes and Cyrus, King of Persia, joined together and overthrew Babylon.

Verses 15-19 repeat the message of Jeremiah 10:12-16 and tell of God's sovereignty. He is omnipotent (all powerful) for "He hath made the earth by his power." He is omniscient (all knowing) for "he hath established the world by his wisdom." He designed the heavens and created the rain cycle. By contrast, trust in idols is vain, and the Babylonians' man-made gods would be no help to them.

Some commentators believe verses 20-24 refer to Babylon, which had been allowed by God to capture Judah. The Babylonian armies had been excessive in their evil and ravaged the land, burned the Temple, and profaned items that had been consecrated to God. Consequently, their nation would be destroyed.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- III. The pronouncement of judgment against the nations
 - I. Against Babylon
 - 6. The impending doom of Babylon (51:1-10)
 - 7. The instructions to the Medes (51:11-14)
 - 8. The revelation of God's sovereignty (51:15-24)

A CLOSER LOOK

- 1. What did the prophet say God would fill Babylon with?**

- 2.** Why do you think God did not utterly forsake Judah even though the people had sinned greatly?

- ### 3. What can we learn from God's faithfulness to fulfill the prophecies about Babylon?

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

Today let's ask ourselves: are we looking at creation and heeding the Creator?

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will plead thy cause, and take vengeance for thee; and I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry.” (Jeremiah 51:36)

Even now I can hear my mother’s words as if it were yesterday. “If anybody tries to do that again, just let me know, and *I* will go and *talk* to them!” she would say emphatically.

These were the “scary” promises of my little mother, a dynamic lady who is several inches shorter than me now that I am fully grown. She was definitely the champion of my siblings and me. If we ever had trouble at school, she was the proverbial mother hen, ready to go and protect her chicks. Mom had a way of saying exactly what she wanted to say, and my siblings and I knew she was on our side as long as we were behaving ourselves. She was a master at pleading our causes!

Her verbal abilities ultimately could prove to be embarrassing, though, so school incidents were not always reported at home. At times it was just easier to put up with a trying situation, rather than to have our teachers and fellow students know that Mom had come to take care of things. But it was always good and reassuring to know we had someone at home who would stick up for us—whether or not we chose to enlist her help!

In our focus verse, God was declaring Himself to be the Champion for the Children of Israel. He would plead their cause against their tormenters because He loved them, and would protect and deliver them when they were obedient to Him. In this portion of Scripture, God was pronouncing judgment upon the nation of Babylon, and wreaking vengeance on behalf of His people.

Let us not forget, as we go about our work and daily lives, that God is our Champion, our Advocate, our Protector, and our Defender. We are His children, and we have the assurance that He will be our source of help in times of trouble. We can call upon Him and rely on Him when we face difficult circumstances. He is ready to plead our cause! And He is always available to help.

BACKGROUND

In today’s text, Jeremiah prophesied the destruction of Babylon. Throughout Israel’s history, God at times used other nations, including Babylon (the

Chaldeans, as they were frequently called), to implement His plan against the disobedient Jewish people. However, the wickedness of the idolatrous Babylonian people was not to go unpunished. Babylon would be destroyed.

God declared that the devastation of this nation would be so extensive that the rubble would not even be re-used for new construction, and the land would be without inhabitant and desolate forever (verses 25-26). Through the prophet, God said He would call for the surrounding nations to come and attack. The mighty men of Babylon apparently felt completely safe within their strong city walls, so when this prophecy was fulfilled and they discovered enemies inside the city, they fled, panic-stricken. Just as He had said, the Lord threshed Babylon as grain is threshed (verse 33).

Nebuchadnezzar had taken all the riches and fine things of Judea, devouring the good and discarding the remains. Therefore, God proclaimed that He would have vengeance, drying up all available water and making Chaldea notably desolate. When this came to pass, Babylon was taken while the inhabitants were celebrating with revelry and wine. Since it was late in the day, some were killed while asleep in bed, suddenly thrusting them into a perpetual sleep (verse 39).

Sheshach (verse 41) was the name of a goddess and idol, and perhaps in this context the name meant Babylon. “The praise of the whole earth,” referred to Babylon’s reputation as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. When it was destroyed, wave after wave of Babylon’s enemies came upon her as a sea, overrunning the city.

Bel (verse 44) was the Babylonians’ supreme deity, and God said He would require all of the treasures stolen for dedication to this idol be returned. Also, nations would no longer flock to admire this great city. In verses 45-46, God warned His people to flee away from Babylon; He asked them to remember Jerusalem, perhaps encouraging them to go and restore the city (verses 50-51). They were ashamed that their Temple had been desecrated by strangers. In verses 52-53, the Lord promised that even if Babylon was fortified to the heavens, He would still avenge His people.

Verses 59-64 record how Jeremiah asked Seraiah to write the prophecy against Babylon and read it to the Children of Israel there. He was then to tie a stone to the prophecy and throw it in the river, signifying the demise of the city.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- III. The pronouncement of judgment against the nations
 - I. Against Babylon
 - 9. The description of Babylon's destruction (51:25-58)
 - 10. The instructions to Seraiah (51:59-64)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Upon what particular aspect of Babylonian culture does the prophecy state that judgment would fall?

2. Why was God so very angry with the Chaldeans?

3. What does God's system of justice in this passage teach us in our day?

CONCLUSION

God is just, and ultimately will not tolerate any form of wickedness. If we live righteously and follow His guidelines, He will be our Advocate.

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, in the five and twentieth day of the month, that Evilmerodach king of Babylon in the first year of his reign lifted up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah, and brought him forth out of prison, and spake kindly unto him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon, and changed his prison garments: and he did continually eat bread before him all the days of his life.” (Jeremiah 52:31-33)

A simple act of kindness can have tremendous impact. I will never forget the kindnesses that were shown to my family some years ago when I was suffering with a debilitating illness that kept me away from my home for many months.

One example in particular comes to mind. My children were primary school age, and the fun of finding costumes for the October school parties was part of our family tradition. In previous years, I had made the kids' costumes myself, delving into my stash of fabrics and relying on ingenuity to deck them out as princesses, storybook characters, animals, or various other things. But this year would be different. I was in the hospital. My husband was doing a masterful job of balancing visits to me with the responsibility of being both mom and dad to our kids . . . but how could I ask him to take on the project of finding dress-up costumes for four children? It was a small thing when one considered the big picture of my life-threatening illness, but it was something that weighed on my mind.

One day after school, the kids bounced in to see me with an exciting announcement. One of the other young mothers in the church had offered to take all of them shopping for costumes! Their delight at this completely unexpected kindness was obvious—but it didn't match the quiet delight in my heart that someone had thought about that particular “need” and had stepped in to meet it.

In our focus verses, we read of a kindness done for Jehoiachin, king of Judah, who had spent thirty-seven difficult years in captivity in Babylon as a consequence of his evil reign. Evilmerodach, the new king of Babylon, showed mercy to Jehoiachin, and as an act of kindness allowed him to experience some measure of material comfort and personal dignity in the final days of his life.

Today, consider those people whose lives touch yours. Is there a way you could show concern and care for someone in your circle of acquaintances? Ask God for a heart that is alert to opportunities to show kindness. You never know just how much that will mean to the recipient!

BACKGROUND

In Jeremiah 52, details of the fall of Jerusalem are cataloged again. This chapter is a historical postscript to the prophecy of Jeremiah, most likely not written by the prophet himself. (Jeremiah 51 ends with the words, “Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.”) Some historians believe it may have been written by Ezra, after the return from captivity.

Almost the same historical postscript can be found at the end of 2 Kings. (See 2 Kings 24:18—25:30.) Much of what is recounted in verses 1-12 was also related in Jeremiah 39:1-18. The postscript was likely added to demonstrate that the prophecy of Jeremiah was fulfilled in all of its detail.

Because of his refusal to obey God's instruction, King Zedekiah was physically blinded by order of the Chaldean king. Then he was bound with chains, taken to Babylon, and imprisoned for life. The Temple of God was destroyed by fire. For the Jews, this was a great historical calamity, not matched again until the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The king's house and the houses of the city were also burned.

Three deportations of the Jews are listed in verses 25 through 30. The first occurred in the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, the second occurred in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (the same time as the destruction of Jerusalem), and the third is only mentioned in this particular passage. The third deportation may have been a punishment for the assassination of Gedaliah. The majority of Jews remained in exile until King Cyrus allowed them to return in 538 B.C.

Verses 31-34 describe the liberation of Jehoiachin by Evilmerodach, the son of Nebuchadnezzar. The reference to “a continual diet given him of the king of Babylon” meant that he received some sort of government pension. Cuneiform tablets discovered in archaeological excavations in the area of Babylon reference Evilmerodach's liberation of Jehoiachin.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

IV. Epilogue (52:1-34)

- A. The description of the fall of Jerusalem (52:1-23)

1. The siege of the city (52:1-5)
 2. The desertion of the city (52:6-11)
 3. The destruction of the city (52:12-14)
 4. The deportation of skilled labor (52:15-16)
 5. The devastation of the city (52:17-23)
- B. The death of the priests and officers (52:24-27)
 - C. The deportation to Babylon (52:28-30)
 - D. The deliverance of Jehoiachin from prison (52:31-34)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What punishment did the king of Babylon inflict upon Zedekiah and his sons?

2. Why did God allow the destruction of His holy Temple?

3. What are some ways we can become more alert to opportunities to do acts of kindness for others?

CONCLUSION

Opportunities to show kindness exist for each one of us. Let's purpose to reach out to others in caring concern whenever we can!

NOTES



Overview for Lamentations

Purpose: The Prophet Jeremiah wrote this book to provide the people of Judah with dirges (mournful songs) that would bewail the destruction of the city of Jerusalem at the hand of the Babylonians, and express their sorrow over their loss of national identity. By vividly describing the horrors and desolation of the siege, the prophet indicated to the people of Judah that God had allowed this terrible tragedy because of their immorality and idolatry. Jeremiah also reminded the people of God's mercy, ending the book with a prayer that God would one day return Israel to her former glory.

Author: The Prophet Jeremiah, one of the greatest Hebrew prophets, who was born into the priestly family of Anathoth, and was a son of Hilkiah.

Time Period Covered: Shortly after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

History: Nebuchadnezzar had besieged Jerusalem for eighteen months, and the beleaguered city finally fell. Solomon's beautiful Temple, which had existed for about four hundred years, had been burned to the ground. The city had been totally demolished, King Zedekiah had been captured, and many of the people of Judah had been taken captive to Babylon. Those who remained in Judah suffered from great poverty and deprivation. The prophet had been an eyewitness to the horrible disaster, and he responded by this outpouring of grief and anguish over the city of God and the terrible plight of the people.

A Biblical account of the fall of Jerusalem can be found in 2 Kings 25 and 2 Chronicles 36.

Key People: Jeremiah and the people of Judah.

Setting: Jeremiah had just witnessed the Babylonian army plunder, burn, and destroy the city of Jerusalem. While Jeremiah never mentioned the name *Babylon* in the Book of Lamentations, the thrust was that this judgment came from God and was a consequence of the people's disobedience.

Special Features: The five chapters in the Book of Lamentations are five separate poems written in a style similar to ancient funeral songs. The Hebrew alphabet has twenty-two letters, and the first four poems in Lamentations are dirges written in an acrostic form, meaning that each verse begins with a consecutive

letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The third poem, which has sixty-six verses, uses each succeeding Hebrew letter three times. The fifth poem was not written in alphabetical order.

In the sequence of the Jewish year, five books of the Hebrew Bible are associated with certain feasts or holidays. These books are used to relate an event that took place during that specific month. The Book of Lamentations is still traditionally read on the ninth of Av (Tisha B'Av), which falls in July or August on the Gregorian calendar, to commemorate the destruction of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem.

Jeremiah's dramatic portrayal of the horrific aftermath and suffering of the people who remained in Judah is interlaced with verses of continuous hope in God's everlasting mercy. The point is made that even in this time of dreadful judgment, God's love, faithfulness, and deliverance were available to those who would turn to Him.

Summary: The first poem (chapter 1) is a dirge mourning the devastation of Jerusalem. The prophet described the ruin of the city and outlined the reason for God's judgment. He lamented the city's desolate condition, and prayed that one day her enemies would suffer the same misfortune.

The second dirge (chapter 2) continues the theme of the wrath of God being poured out upon Jerusalem, but this poem broadens out to include the Jewish people in general. Approximately forty aspects of divine retribution are described in this chapter, impacting nearly every facet of Jewish life.

Chapter 3 is the personal lament of the anguished prophet. Included in this chapter is the most hopeful insight in the book (verses 19-42) and Jeremiah's prayer for the suffering people.

Chapter 4, the fourth and final dirge, describes the siege of the ruined kingdom, and is a song of contrasts. It compares the former glory of Judah to its dreadful state after the Babylonian siege and the destruction of the city.

The book concludes with a prayer for a penitent nation (chapter 5) in which the miseries the people had undergone were recited. This lament was designed to bring the people to a position of humility and repentance, in which they would cast themselves upon the mercy of God.

Timeline

See “The Divided Kingdom” four-page timeline included in this unit.

Outline

*Hannah's Bible Outlines used by permission per WORDsearch.
A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.*

- I. The devastation and sorrow of Jerusalem (1:1-22)
 - A. The lament of Jeremiah (1:1-11)
 - B. The lament of Jerusalem (1:12-22)
- II. The destruction of Jehovah on Jerusalem (2:1-22)
 - A. The wrath of God (2:1-10)
 - B. The devastation of the city (2:11-19)
 - C. The prayer of the city (2:20-22)
- III. The lamentation and prayer of Jeremiah (3:1-66)
 - A. The sorrows of Jeremiah (3:1-18)
 - B. The confidence of Jeremiah (3:19-38)
 - C. The prayer of Jeremiah (3:39-66)
- IV. The description of the siege of Jerusalem (4:1-22)
 - A. The horrors of the siege (4:1-10)
 - B. The cause of the siege (4:11-20)
 - C. The judgment upon Edom (4:21-22)
- V. The petition for the restoration of the remnant (5:1-22)
 - A. The lament of the remnant (5:1-18)
 - B. The prayer of the remnant (5:19-22)



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!”
(Lamentations 1:1)**

It was just before lunch time on a day that seemed like any other. The townspeople went about their normal activities. Some were preparing food in their villas; others were in the marketplace. Trading companies were open for business, and visitors filled the inns. Merchants arranged their wares, and laborers worked on the aqueducts which supplied the fountains and private baths around the busy port city.

Suddenly there was a stir in the earth and then . . . chaos! The sky grew dark. Within minutes the streets and the buildings were meters deep in ash. Where moments before there had been laughter, now there was ominous silence. Instead of the bustle of a thriving town's activity, now there was only stillness. Mount Vesuvius had exploded in the famous eruption of 79 A.D. and the city of Pompeii was no more.

More than six hundred years prior to the tragedy of Pompeii, the Prophet Jeremiah mourned over another solitary city that had been full of people but had become “as a widow.” The city of Jerusalem, too, had once been a thriving metropolis and had a name among the nations. However, as the prophet wrote the anguished words of our text, the city was empty, desolate, and its people in captivity. Our focus verse begins Jeremiah's song of sorrow for Jerusalem's destruction.

While the devastation of Pompeii was a natural disaster, the reason for the terrible calamity that befell Jerusalem is recorded in verse 8: “Jerusalem hath grievously sinned.” Verse 14 proclaims that “the LORD hath delivered me into their hands, from whom I am not able to rise up.” Jerusalem's destruction was caused by her neglect and rebellion against God, and divine retribution had fallen.

What a warning for our day! Throughout God's Word we find that the ultimate consequence of sin is eternal destruction. Just as judgment fell upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, judgment will one day fall upon this world because of those who defy God. The Bible foretells this, and we know it is going to come to pass.

Today, are we listening to God's Word? Are we heeding the warnings in it? Are we obeying Him?

While we cannot prevent judgment from falling upon this world, we can make sure of our personal relationship with God. Listening, heeding, and obeying brings God's blessing into our lives—and provides escape from the divine judgment that is sure to fall if we do not follow His instructions!

BACKGROUND

The armies of Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar had invaded Jerusalem, razed the city, destroyed the Temple, and taken the people captive. Jeremiah's Lamentations, beginning with today's text, is a series of funeral dirges. In them, the Prophet Jeremiah deeply grieved the decimation of the once-great city of Jerusalem. Chapter 1 describes the devastation of the city, reiterates the reason for the destruction, and portrays the sorrow and agony of the inhabitants. It closes with a prayer against the enemies of Judah, petitioning God to bring the same misfortune upon them as had befallen Jerusalem.

This chapter, as well as the three chapters which follow, was written in acrostic or alphabetical form. The first verse starts with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet (Aleph), and each succeeding verse starts with the succeeding letter, ending in Taw, the last letter of the alphabet.

In verse 1, Jerusalem is referred to as a “widow.” In Biblical prose, cities are often characterized as the “mother” of their inhabitants. Kings are referred to as “husbands,” and the princes as “children.” When these have been taken away, the cities are alluded to as childless widows.

Verses 2 and 19 describe how those countries from whom Jerusalem had sought help, her “lovers” and “friends,” had betrayed her. Nations who had once sought for her friendship were now her enemies.

In verses 12 through 22 Jeremiah personified the destruction of Jerusalem, describing the outpouring of God's wrath as though it had happened to him personally. He keenly felt the anguish and heartbreak of Jerusalem's demise.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- I. The devastation and sorrow of Jerusalem (1:1-22)
 - A. The lament of Jeremiah (1:1-11)
 - 1. The fact: Jerusalem's desolation (1:1-7)
 - 2. The reason: Jerusalem's sin (1:8-11)
 - B. The lament of Jerusalem (1:12-22)
 - 1. The judgment of God (1:12-15)
 - 2. The confession of Jerusalem (1:16-22)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What are some of the reasons why the people of Jerusalem mourned?

2. Sin will ultimately result in sorrow. What are some examples of this in today's world?

[illegible]

3. We know that Christians suffer as a result of national sins. How can we overcome in spite of an environment that rejects God?

CONCLUSION

If we obey God, we will be blessed. If we disobey, we will be judged. Let us heed the warning and make sure that we live to please Him.

NOTES

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“He hath cut off in his fierce anger all the horn of Israel: he hath drawn back his right hand from before the enemy, and he burned against Jacob like a flaming fire, which devoureth round about.” (Lamentations 2:3)

One spark on a hot August afternoon in 1933 forever changed people’s lives, the landscape, and the future of what is known today as the Tillamook State Forest. On August 14, a steel cable dragging a fallen Douglas fir rubbed against the dry bark of a wind-fallen snag. The snag burst into flame, and the wildfire that grew from it burned 240,000 acres, transforming the original forest into a virtual wasteland. It destroyed almost twelve billion board feet of timber, enough lumber to build more than a million five-room houses. Subsequent fires in nearby areas over the next eighteen years, also included in the title “Tillamook Burn,” resulted in a combined total of 354,936 acres of destruction.¹

I remember driving through the decimated area as a child. Though much of the Tillamook Burn on the Coastal Range between Portland and the Pacific Coast had been reforested by that time, the blackened spars of charred trees still stood starkly against the skyline in some areas. I had never seen a forest fire, but in my childish mind, I would picture the blaze leaping from tree to tree, roaring with power, and devouring everything in its path.

Fire is a dangerous and consuming element of nature. Many of the great forests of the world have been impacted by wildfires. Sometimes old growth forests are burned down. Yet, destructive as these blazes are, they also play a beneficial and purging role in the ecological process. Just a short time after fire decimates an area, new vegetation begins to grow from the burned remains. Today it is generally accepted that wildfires are a natural part of the ecosystem of numerous wildlands. Smoke and charred wood have been found to stimulate the germination of seeds.

Our focus verse says that God burned against Jacob like a flaming fire which devoureth round about. In our text, we find that God saw a need to purge His people because of their rebellion against Him and, like a forest fire of our day, destruction ensued. God burned with anger against a nation that had forgotten Him.

Many times in the Bible, God’s wrath and judgment is compared to fire. When we consider the

physical effects of a great fire, we get a picture of the terrible power of God’s wrath. However, just as occurs after a tremendous physical blaze, life can emerge after devastation. In fact, the very blaze itself may purge out impurities and stimulate new growth.

The blazing forth of God’s wrath against the people of Jerusalem should be both a warning and a hope to us. What care we should take to obey God and not to resist and rebel against Him! When we experience God’s forgiveness for our sins, there is life and blessing—a new spiritual start—even though our life prior to salvation seemed to be one of devastation and ruin. Yes, God is a God of wrath and judgment. But today, He is also a God of mercy and restoration!

BACKGROUND

In His anger at a disobedient nation, God had poured out judgment upon Jerusalem. Chapter 2 continues the general theme of the prophet, presenting the second of his funeral dirges for the fallen city. However, this chapter broadens the description given in chapter 1 to present a detailed account of God’s wrath upon His people and the results of His anger, giving approximately forty aspects of divine retribution. It also calls for God’s people to turn to Him in repentance if they want to receive mercy from Him.

The “tabernacle” referred to in verse 6 is King Solomon’s Temple at Jerusalem. As the central place of worship, it represented God’s presence with His people. Thus, its destruction and the fact that all of the spiritual activities had been taken away was an indication that God had removed His presence from a people who had rejected Him.

The four symbols mentioned in verse 9 reveal that God’s wrath was also poured out on the political and spiritual structures of that day. The “gates” of the city symbolize its protection, so the fact that they were “sunk into the ground” indicates that the security the people had relied upon had been taken away. “Her king and her princes,” symbolizing the monarchy and the city’s political leadership, were in exile. The “law” of the land that had been constituted by God himself, was destroyed. The “prophets,” symbolic of God’s spiritual leadership, were without vision—that revelation from God which was essential in order for them to lead the people spiritually.

This chapter also gives a picture of the prophet as a man torn emotionally, mentally, and spiritually because of the people’s sins. Verse 11 gives insight into Jeremiah’s feelings—he had cried until no more tears would come. His tears were not selfish tears resulting

from personal trauma or loss; the prophet wept for the pain and humiliation of the people, and because God had rejected the people for their stubborn rebellion against Him. His heart was broken when he witnessed the effects of sin—a city that had been devastated and left in ruins, and a people scattered. The phrase “my liver is poured upon the earth” symbolizes how torn asunder the prophet was emotionally. In that culture and era, the liver was associated with the emotional aspect of one’s life.

Verse 15 reveals the extent of God’s anger. The people were brought so low that when other people and nations looked upon them, they were ridiculed.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- III. The destruction of Jehovah on Jerusalem (2:1-22)
 - A. The wrath of God (2:1-10)
 - B. The devastation of the city (2:11-19)
 - 1. The destruction of famine (2:11-13)
 - 2. The empty hope of false prophets (2:14)
 - 3. The derision of the enemies (2:15-16)
 - 4. The fulfillment of Jehovah’s plan (2:17)
 - 5. The lament of Jerusalem (2:18-19)
 - C. The prayer of the city (2:20-22)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. To what destructive element did the prophet compare God’s fury?

2. Why did Jeremiah mourn so deeply for Jerusalem and its people?

3. How should we react to the tearing down of the God-fearing and God-respecting aspects of our society, and the moral degradation around us?

CONCLUSION

There is restoration and blessing when new life in Christ begins.

NOTES

1. Doug Decker, “Tillamook Burn,” *Oregon Historical Society: Oregon Encyclopedia*, Last updated March 11, 2022, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/tillamook_burn.



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness.” (Lamentations 3:21-23)

Looking at the burned-out shells of cars, expanses of charred earth, and chimneys towering over the blackened rubble that once had been stately homes, my daughter saw firsthand the destruction caused by wildfires. As she worked with the Red Cross handing out supplies to those who had lost everything in the Lake Tahoe fire, her heart cried with those who had experienced such devastating losses. Many times, she observed that those returning to their neighborhoods to see if any of their belongings could be salvaged became disoriented as they walked into the area, because nothing looked the same anymore. The grief she saw on the faces of those whose property had been destroyed was overwhelming.

However, in the middle of that scene of devastation, there were some evidences of hope. While delivering food to the area on the third day after the fire, she noticed that someone had placed an American flag on the lawn of one burned-out home. Not far away a sign stated, “We will never give up!” Bulldozers were already clearing away the debris so rebuilding could begin.

As I listened to my daughter describe what she had seen and felt, I was reminded of Jeremiah and his lamentations over Jerusalem. In our devotional text, Jeremiah gave a vivid picture of Jerusalem lying in ruin. He expressed his deep grief for the Jews who had lost their city, their homes, their possessions, and their freedom. Solomon’s Temple, the symbol of the nation’s connection with God, had been torn down, and fine households had been turned into rubble.

The ruin of Jerusalem was not caused by a natural disaster, but was the result of God’s anger being directed at His people and their city because of their great and continual sins. However, as we see in our focus verses, in the midst of terrible destruction, the Prophet Jeremiah found a ray of hope. He recognized that it was only the Lord’s mercy and love that had kept them from total destruction, and that God’s love to His people would never fail.

Today, we have that same hope. We can rejoice that the Lord’s compassions are still the same and will never fail. When we are willing to follow God’s

leading and yield ourselves completely to Him, we will find that with the Lord, there is always hope. Even for those who are serving God, trials may come, but He will never forsake us or allow us one burden too heavy to bear. God will lovingly respond to our cries when we call on Him. He remains ever faithful, and His mercies are, indeed, “new every morning.”

BACKGROUND

There are five poems in the Book of Lamentations. Jewish teachers call these poems “wailings.” The Latin version of the Bible calls them lamentations. Today’s text is part of the third poem of this book.

This third lamentation was written from a personal standpoint, and all of the thoughts expressed in this text contain the words “I,” “me,” or “my.” The first eighteen verses of the chapter are the prophet’s cry of desperation to God. The fact that it was written in the first person did not negate the use of the poem as a communal song of mourning, because Jeremiah identified himself with the people in their affliction. In some ways, the prophet seemed to picture himself as being typical of the nation. As the people’s spiritual representative before God, he had carried their grief and sorrows, and had felt the rod of divine wrath.

The prophet had been through so much adversity that happiness and hope had all but vanished from his life. In verse 14, he related that his own people had taunted and derided him for his message.

The wormwood referred to in verse 15 was a bitter plant that grew in the deserts of Palestine and Syria, and was a symbol of calamity and injustice. It was commonly associated with gall, another bitter and poisonous herb which was commonly administered before crucifixion to deaden pain.

The gravel stones mentioned in verse 16 of the text referred to a punishment where foreign substances like sand were mixed with food. Because of sin, Judah’s teeth were broken; as a punishment for her idolatry, God had given her stones to eat instead of bread.

Verses 19 through 38 offer the one glimmer of hope in this book of sorrowful laments. After pouring out his complaint before the Lord, Jeremiah remembered the Lord’s mercies and great compassion—things he had lost sight of in his desperate grief. In recalling this, he found hope again for the Jewish nation. He grasped that out of the faithfulness of His promises, God gives limitless mercies, new every morning that never fail. His compassions—love

in action — will always be there. Jeremiah went on to express that the Lord is loving and patient to those who trust in Him, so Judah should be patient while waiting for the Lord’s help to them during their awful sufferings.

In verse 29, the reference to putting the “mouth in the dust” related to an oriental method of expressing complete submission, in which the humble one would throw himself down in silent confession of unworthiness. Jeremiah was portraying what should be done by those who were suffering as they waited on God.

Verses 31 through 35 offer three assurances to comfort the afflicted. The prophet promised that there would be an end to sorrow, that God would show compassion according to the fullness of grace, and that God’s chastisement of His children was a necessary part of spiritual growth. God never delights in sending sorrow and pain to those He loves. However, He did not approve of the injustice or cruelty that the people of Judah had been involved in, so punishment had fallen in a mighty way on them and their land. Yet, God in loving mercy would ultimately deliver them.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- III. The lamentation and prayer of Jeremiah
 - A. The sorrows of Jeremiah (3:1-18)
 - B. The confidence of Jeremiah (3:19-38)

A CLOSER LOOK

1. What was one thing that gave Jeremiah hope?

2. Why do you think the prophet expressed this lament in terms of his personal anguish?

3. “Bearing the yoke,” referred to in verse 27, means willingly submitting to God’s discipline and learning what He wants to teach us. What are some ways we can do this?

CONCLUSION

When things are falling apart around us and destruction seems to be everywhere, God’s mercy is there with us as our ray of hope. His compassions are new every morning. If we call on Him, He will not fail us!

NOTES



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee: thou saidst, Fear not.” (Lamentations 3:57)

During the 1930s, a missionary to India found herself battling discouragement. Her physical, mental, and emotional reserves were spent, and she wondered whether she could find the courage to go on. Desperate, she appealed to her one source of strength: God in Heaven, who knew exactly what she was facing. And God answered her prayer in a remarkable way.

Though unaware of how very discouraged this missionary was, or how exhausted her resources were, a friend back home felt led to send the missionary a record of a newly published song, “He Giveth More Grace” written by Annie Johnson Flint. When the record arrived, the missionary excitedly placed it on her Victrola record player and began to listen to the song. The words spoke to her soul:

*He giveth more grace as the burdens grow greater,
He sendeth more strength as the labors increase,
To added afflictions He addeth His mercy,
To multiplied trials His multiplied peace.*

*His love has no limit; His grace has no measure.
His pow’r has no boundary known unto men.
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.*

When the record got to the phrase “He giveth and giveth and giveth . . .” the needle on her Victrola got stuck—and over and over again she heard that phrase. Each time the words sounded in her humble room, her assurance in the faithfulness of God deepened, until there was absolute joy in her heart. God had drawn near, and she realized anew that God truly wanted her to experience His unlimited and overflowing provisions for her needs.

In today’s focus verse, Jeremiah reminisced about a time when God had drawn near and brought encouragement to him. At one point in his ministry to rebellious Judah, the prophet had been thrown into a dungeon and left to die (Jeremiah 38:6-13). As he had prayed desperately for deliverance from that dreadful situation, God had drawn near and answered with the reassuring words, “Fear not.”

Although most of us may not find ourselves in a faraway land preaching the Gospel, or in a dungeon because of our faith, all of us will face challenges in our walks with the Lord. In those times, it will help us to remember that God is always faithful to hear and

respond to the cries of His people. Like the message to the missionary, His words to us may be, “He giveth more grace . . .” It may be, “Fear not . . .” as it was to the Prophet Jeremiah. However the encouragement comes, we can be sure that God is with us and knows exactly what is needed to lift our spirits.

BACKGROUND

This portion of chapter 3 moves away from the prophet’s theme of confidence and hope in God (verses 19-38) into a call for repentance. In the first four verses of the text, Jeremiah exhorted the people to acknowledge their transgressions and once again cry out to God. In verse 42, the prophet returned again to the theme of affliction, and his words became a prayer. Judah had angered God and this brought not only physical punishment but also spiritual isolation from God. Verse 44 states the people’s prayers could not pass through the barrier God had permitted.

The desolation of Judah caused Jeremiah to shed many tears. It is no wonder that he was known as the weeping prophet. His tears would be without ceasing until God looked down from Heaven (verses 48-51).

In verses 52-54, the prophet reflected upon a time when his enemies had hunted him down, cast him into a dungeon, and left him in the mire at the bottom. It appears that a stone was then placed over the top of the dungeon, or that stones were cast down upon him (verse 53). Jeremiah had realized that his life was in peril, for in this portion of Scripture he recalled his prayer for deliverance from the horrific circumstance. In verses 55-58, Jeremiah remembered the assurance he had received that God had heard his cry and would deliver and redeem him.

Jeremiah was confident, as recorded in verses 59-66, that God was aware of the pain and anguish suffered by both Judah and himself personally. He felt that God would do whatever was necessary to bring about a just and proper end to the situation.

AMPLIFIED OUTLINE

Hannah’s Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- III. The lamentation and prayer of Jeremiah
 - C. The prayer of Jeremiah (3:39-66)
 - 1. The prayer of repentance (3:39-51)
 - 2. The prayer of vindication (3:52-66)

A CLOSER LOOK

- 1. What verses indicate the depth of Jeremiah’s grief?

[illegible]

When we face challenges in our Christian walks, we can cry out to the Lord and be assured that He hears and will bring us the encouragement we need.

[illegible]



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

**“How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street.”
(Lamentations 4:1)**

Desolation . . . as far as the eye could see, it was a city in ruins. United States Air Force sergeants Bob and Reuel Green could hardly comprehend what they were seeing. The unthinkable had become history, the atomic bomb had fallen, and they were viewing the results. Hiroshima, Japan—once a beautiful city of 300,000 inhabitants—had been wiped out in a matter of seconds.

In the early morning hours of August 6, 1945, these two brothers had been on an American transport ship headed to Okinawa. As their convoy steamed out of Subic Bay in the Philippine Islands, an announcement over the ship’s loud speaker informed the military personnel on board that an atomic bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima. As Bob and Reuel absorbed that world-changing news, they had no idea that just a few months later, they would view that terrible scene of destruction with their own eyes.

Nothing could have prepared them for what they saw during their time in Hiroshima, on December 30, 1945. Bob relates, “That was a walk that I will never, ever forget. It was a quiet city; there was hardly a rustle. The streets had been cleared, but that was all. Mounds of debris and broken down buildings were everywhere. They had built some shacks with corrugated metal roofs in the rubble—just found something as a support on two or three sides and put a sheet of metal across the top, to make a hovel down there. Reuel and I had seen cities before that had been bombed—Manila, Osaka, and Kobe—but this city had been devastated by just one bomb. It was absolutely staggering. I remember, it was almost like you were walking on hallowed ground. You didn’t even want to talk out loud.”

Unlike the sudden destruction that obliterated Hiroshima, the city of Jerusalem had suffered a slow, lingering death. Today’s text describes how the people—literally trapped within the city’s fortified walls by the Babylonian army’s siege—ran out of food. Filled with eye-witness details, these verses describe how priorities changed, people became desperate, and positions of influence meant nothing. Things of value became worthless—even the gold and the “stones of the sanctuary,” mentioned in our focus verse, became

as valueless as rubbish. The streets of the city, once busy avenues of commerce and companionship, were empty except for the scattered rubble of the Temple, dying children, and people disfigured by the effects of starvation.

The sad commentary about this account was that it did not have to be this way for Jerusalem. As the chosen city of God, all that God asked of its people was hearts that would truly worship Him. The people of Jerusalem had chosen to rebel against the God of the universe, and thus had brought this horrible judgment upon themselves.

We can learn a lesson from the terrible devastation of Jerusalem. It is imperative that we heed the commands of God. When He calls us to serve Him and honor His name through the way we live, He expects us to do just that. If we ignore and reject His mercy and grace, we will bring judgment upon ourselves, and most likely will cause innocent people to suffer as well. Ultimately, utter destruction awaits those who refuse God’s love. But it does not have to be that way! He offers a way of escape for everyone—we simply need to take advantage of the offer and live to please our Creator.

BACKGROUND

Chapter 4 continues on with the account of the holy city of Israel, Jerusalem, in ruins. Given the detailed descriptions in this chapter, commentators agree that the narrator must have been a first-hand witness to the complete devastation of this once powerful, beautiful city.

The focus verse refers to the Temple gold. King Solomon’s Temple, a masterpiece of craftsmanship and extravagance, had been torn apart. The fires of war had caused the once bright and polished gold of the Temple sanctuary and holy of holies to become dim. The phrase “stones of the sanctuary” in this verse has a double meaning. There were the literal twelve stones on the breastplate of the high priest; but also, metaphorically speaking, this could refer to the priests and Levites who performed the ceremonial and sacred duties of Temple worship. Because of their sins, they had been cast out of their consecrated office to become as common people.

The siege against Jerusalem lasted for eighteen months, and caused the slow but utter destruction of the city. The walls that served to protect its inhabitants during times of war also prevented the besieged inhabitants from harvesting crops and gaining access to water supplies. This chapter of Jeremiah’s lament

3. How might decisions made against what we know God has instructed affect our lives and those in our care?

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

Pain and utter misery await those who fail to follow God's instructions. Let us learn from the terrible destruction of Jerusalem, and purpose to escape divine judgment by being obedient to God and faithful in our worship of Him.

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

NOTES

-
- This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no text or other markings on the paper.

- ## A CLOSER LOOK

- 2.** Why do you think Jeremiah stated that it would be better to be “slain with the sword” rather than “slain with hunger”?

- 2.** Why do you think Jeremiah stated that it would be better to be “slain with the sword” rather than “slain with hunger”?



DEVOTIONAL FOCUS

“Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old.” (Lamentations 5:21)

The heartfelt, repentant cry of our focus verse brings to mind the testimony of Ray Roll. What an example he is of one who was “turned,” and found his days renewed “as of old”!

He testified, “I was here in the Apostolic Faith work for almost thirty years of my life. I had the privilege to teach a Sunday school class, and to be a guard on the old campground. But during the War, I was working for the telephone company. We started working long hours and I thought I didn’t have time to pray or to read my Bible. Then the devil came to me and said, ‘Your trouble is that you don’t know what the world has to offer. You ought to give it a try.’ I listened to him, and was gone from these folks for forty-five years. But God still loved me. Oh, His love and mercy are beyond understanding!

“One day I was walking across my living room floor when I fell flat on my face. They took me to the hospital and seven doctors checked me over. Finally they came to me and said, ‘There is nothing wrong with you, except you can’t walk.’ They sent me home and said they could do nothing for me.

“God began to talk to me. He said, ‘Do you know why you can’t walk? I made you that way! You were so stubborn you wouldn’t listen to Me. I have tried to tell you for years that you were on the wrong road, but you didn’t have time to listen. Now, maybe you will. Where are you going to spend eternity?’ God had my attention. I told Him if He would just give me one more chance to go back to the Apostolic Faith Church, I would serve Him the rest of my days. I wasn’t a young man by that time; I was past seventy-five years old when I made that statement. But I kept my promise.

“God said to me, ‘It’s a Tuesday night. They are having a service. Why don’t you go?’ I went upstairs and got dressed, and when I came down my wife said, ‘Where do you think you are going?’ I said, ‘I am going to church.’ She said, ‘You haven’t walked for a year. You can’t drive the car. How are you going to get there?’ I said, ‘The Lord will get me there.’ I took my cane and hobbled out to my car. I couldn’t even lift my right foot off the ground, but I got in the car and started to this blessed place. I got to a stop sign and had to use my left foot to brake. There were stop

lights the rest of the way to the church, but when I came to them, God turned them green. He saw that I was headed the right way and He didn’t want me to stop.

“When I pulled into the parking lot, I got out of my car and started walking into the church. The thought came to me, I haven’t walked for a year, and now I am walking! God had healed me right there on the spot. I walked in the door and a sister in the narthex greeted me. I told her, ‘God is expecting me.’ As the meeting went forth, oh, it brought back memories! And thank God, when the altar call was given, I didn’t take my cane and hobble down the aisle. I didn’t walk down the aisle. I ran to the altar! At the place of prayer, I poured out my heart and said, ‘O God, be merciful to me a sinner.’ I meant it from the bottom of my heart, and He rolled the burden of sin away. When I left the church that night, I had the peace and joy of Heaven down in my heart. He changed my life and made it worth living. How I thank Him for what He has done for me!”

Our text today is a prayer, framed in terms of great urgency. Like Ray Roll, the prophet made a fervent appeal to God, remembering the mercy of the Lord and believing that help would be forthcoming. Although God had turned away from His people because of their sin, He did not abandon them—and that was their great hope.

Because of the sinful state of mankind, there is no hope for man except in the Lord. What a wonderful and gracious God we serve!

BACKGROUND

This chapter is a prayer, and is the only chapter in Lamentations which was not written in acrostic form, nor in the style of a funeral dirge. It was designed to be the penitent prayer of a broken nation—a nation that had finally realized the cost of angering God. By turning its back on Him, Judah had lost the privileges, blessings, and protection that it had enjoyed for so many years, and in this portion of the book, the prophet recorded the people’s miseries.

The first eighteen verses of chapter 5 give a glimpse as to why this once-great nation was suffering. In verse 1, the prophet, speaking as a voice of the people, asked God to once again look upon them and consider their suffering. Verses 2-18 paint a picture of a nation in ruin. Their homes were inhabited by strangers (verse 2). The structure of the Jewish society of that time had collapsed. The sins of the past, plus the rebelliousness of that day, had finally caught

In the last four verses of our text, the focus turns to the greatness of God. In verse 19, the prophet acknowledges God. With desperate longing, he verbalizes a plea designed to guide the people to a position of humility and repentance, asking God to remember them and turn away the fierceness of His great wrath.

Hannah's Bible Outlines
Used by permission per WORDsearch

- ## A CLOSER LOOK

- 2.** Why do you think the people indicated their confidence that if God would “turn” to them, they would be turned? (Lamentations 5:21)

NOTES

[illegible]

Israel Taken Captive

Copyright © 2001 by Tyndale House Publishers. Used by permission.



2 Kings 17:1-23

Finally the sins of Israel's people caught up with them. God allowed Assyria to defeat and disperse the people. They were led into captivity, swallowed up by the mighty, evil Assyrian Empire. Sin always brings discipline, and the consequences of that sin are sometimes irreversible.

Judah Exiled

Copyright © 2001 by Tyndale House Publishers. Used by permission.



2 Kings 25:1-30

Evil permeated Judah, and God's anger flared against his rebellious people. Babylon conquered Assyria and became the new world power. The Babylonian army marched into Jerusalem, burned the Temple, tore down the city's massive walls, and carried off the people into captivity.

