

Message #15

Jeremiah 11:1-23

You and I are living in a world that thinks no one should ever lose their temper and retaliate. This may be our world but this is not God's world. In fact, that kind of thinking does not honor God because it is not true to Him, His character and His word. God is a just God. There is retributive justice that He unleashes.

If I walk toward a police officer with a knife in my hand, and he says drop it and I don't, I expect him to shoot me. If I have a gun in my hand and a police officer tells me to drop it and I don't, I expect him to shoot me. I don't care what his color is or my color is that is what I expect and that is what should happen. That is what is just and right.

You may ask where do you get the idea that this is the right kind of thing? That idea comes from the Bible and it comes from Jeremiah 11.

If God says to His people if you don't drop your evil, I will drop you, you can know with certainty that is exactly what God will do and you and I had better expect Him to do it. **God is not playing games with His warnings.**

God has a grace side and God has an angry side and if He is pushed to that angry limit, He will do something about it. When He says, "drop the evil or I'll drop you," He means it. That is the point of this chapter.

GOD EXPECTS HIS PEOPLE WHO ARE IN A COVENANT RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM TO OBEY HIS WORD AND GET RID OF THEIR EVIL AND IF THEY DO NOT DO THAT HE WILL BRING DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES ON THEM.

God does not fool around on this point. Metaphorically, God says if you do not drop your evil, I will shoot. He expects His people who are in a covenant relationship with Him to act like His people and if they don't, He will do some very disastrous things to them.

In this chapter there are nine warning messages:

Warning Message #1 - God warned His people that they needed to carefully obey the word of God in view of their covenant relationship with God. **11:1-7**

The verb "hear" in **verse 2** is an imperative verb and it is plural, which means this command was not just addressed to Jeremiah, but to all the leaders and all the people who are in a covenant relationship with God. These people were in a covenant relationship with God. They were His people, just like every believer in Jesus Christ.

However, the verb "say" in **verse 3** is singular, which means Jeremiah has the responsibility to tell this to the covenant people of God.

God had entered into a covenant relationship with Israel. In fact, Israel is the only nation in the world that came into existence because of a covenant of God (Genesis 15:18). Now what Jeremiah was to say was “cursed is the man who does not heed the words of this covenant.”

The covenant to which the LORD is referring is the covenant He made with national Israel and the curses and blessings that He lays out in Deuteronomy 27-28, specifically Deuteronomy 27:26; 28:15. These curses or blessings were based upon obedience or disobedience.

In fact, according to **verse 4**, God specifies that the words were the words that He commanded His people to obey when He brought them out of Egypt. **He told His people that if they would obey His word, He would be their God and they would be His people.**

In **verse 5**, God says My intent was to bring you out of the furnace of Egypt and lead you to a land flowing with milk and honey.

So Jeremiah was to proclaim to the people of God that they were to obey the covenant of God and He would bless them, but if they did not obey, He would curse them and punish His people.

In **verse 5**, Jeremiah said, “Amen, O LORD.” That Hebrew word “amen” comes from a root word that means it is confirmed, reliable and true.

Jeremiah agreed with this great eternal truth that God’s people need to carefully obey the word of God. This is a great eternal truth.

In **verse 6**, God told Jeremiah that he was to proclaim all these words in all the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. God wanted Jeremiah to travel through the land proclaiming this message to His people.

According to **verse 7**, God wanted Jeremiah to specifically reemphasize that His people needed to be warned to listen to the word of God.

So Jeremiah was to go to the people and tell them you are in a covenant relationship with God that promises blessings for obedience and cursings for disobedience. This is the same message that has been communicated to God’s people since the beginning of their covenant relationship.

Warning Message #2 - God’s people did not obey the word of God. **11:8**

Verse 8 presents the real heart of the issue. The people did not listen to the word of God. They would not obey it and they would not listen to it and they all walked in their own ways and stubbornness of their own evil hearts.

When God has a covenant relationship with people and His word promises blessings and cursings for disobedience or obedience, then the choice goes to the people as to what they will do and which they will choose.

If the people decide to obey, God will bless them. If the people decide to disobey, God will curse them.

God's people would not obey the word of God, they would not listen to the word of God, but they just kept living life in stubborn rebellion following the evil of their own hearts. They thought they were at peace with God even if they weren't serious about obeying God's word. Religious leaders were telling them this.

If you are a child of God, you have choices and the choices are either to listen to the word of God and obey it or don't listen to it and don't obey it. But what God's people need to know is that **their choices in this matter will bring consequences. All commandments of God do matter.**

Warning Message #3 - God's people have turned back to their old iniquities. **11:9-10**

This is so tragic. God's people conspired together to turn against the word of God. Do you see this? The people actually decided to turn their back on the word of God and turn back to the evil sin of their ancestors.

The word "iniquity" (avon) refers to depraved and perverse things. Instead of turning to righteousness, they turned to evil and depraved things. It is possible for God's people to turn to depraved things one too many times.

The people decided no longer to worship the true God of the Bible, but to worship the false gods of heathen nations.

This conspiracy probably happened shortly after Josiah died. During the days of Josiah, the people were devoted to worshipping the true God because Josiah got rid of all idolatrous worship.

Warning Message #4 - God warns that He will bring disaster on His own people. **11:11a**

God tells Jeremiah to tell the people that He would Personally send an inescapable disaster on His own people that they would not be able to escape. The covenant that God has made with His people guarantees this response for disobedience. **God cannot and will not ever bless one in sin and rebellion.**

The word "disaster" (ra) is a very interesting Hebrew word. It is a word that speaks of bad, hurtful, disastrous things that leave people totally miserable and unhappy because of their unfortunate condition (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 772).

This warning is a warning of serious negative, hurtful things that do not leave His people living life happily ever after. God's people need to realize that God can cause their world to fall apart. It is a warning that says to God's people, drop your evil or I will drop and devastate you.

Warning Message #5 - God's people will cry to Him but it will be too late. **11:11b**

God says the people will cry out to Me when I bring this disaster on them and I will not listen. This is a very serious condition for a child of God. It is possible to have disobeyed God's word to the point where God says I will no longer answer any of your prayers.

In Proverbs 1:24-28, God says because I called you to turn to Me and you did not do it, "I will mock you when your dread comes" (v. 26) and "Then they will call on me but I will not answer; they will diligently seek Me but they will not find Me" (v. 28).

It is possible for God's people to reject God's invitation to return to Him once too often until He says it is too late. I will not even listen to your prayer for help anymore.

Warning Message #6 - God will destroy the cities of Judah and Jerusalem for shameful idolatry.
11:12-13

God makes it clear that the reason He is doing this is because of their worship of all kinds of false deities.

What God is describing here is a literal physical destruction that He is sovereignly causing against His own people in their cities. This is not metaphorical language. This is a real threat.

God can literally destroy cities. In the previous chapter 10:13, God says I control the wind and I can cause it to do whatever I want it to do.

Warning Message #7 - God has pronounced evil against His own people and He will not listen to their prayers because His people are worthless. **11:14-17**

This is the second time in the book that God has told Jeremiah to stop praying for His people (7:16).

God's people believed they could cling to their evil idolatries and then get in trouble and cry out to the true God and get God's help whenever they wanted.

In fact, according to **verse 15**, they assumed they could offer the proper sacrifices and appease God and get God's deliverance from the disaster. But as God says, "What right do you have to even be in My house?" They were going to the house of the LORD and sacrificing their animals and it meant nothing. They were not serious about God and His word. This was a religious, ritualistic sham.

This does raise a very important point. Most people think they do God a favor by going to church. The fact is, when a true child of God goes to church, he should go to worship God and have fellowship with God. If one is going to church, while all the while living a life that is sinful and evil, their church attendance means nothing.

God describes His people in **verse 16**. They were supposed to be a beautiful fruit-bearing tree, but God was going to hit her with a bolt of fire and she would be worthless and dead.

Warning Message #8 - God shows Jeremiah what the people were planning to do to him.
11:18-20

Being a communicator of God's word is hard work. The LORD made Jeremiah aware of what the people were plotting behind his back. God showed him the evil deeds of the people and He also showed him what they wanted to do to him. They wanted to kill him.

When Jeremiah was given this information according to **verse 19**, he felt like a lamb being led to slaughter.

Because of the message Jeremiah had been proclaiming to the people, they wanted him dead. The people had devised a plot against Jeremiah to destroy him and cut him off from the land of the living and wipe out his name. They felt by killing Jeremiah they would eliminate even his name.

In **verse 20**, Jeremiah appealed to God as the righteous judge who knows the feelings and he asks God to pour out His vengeance on his enemies and let him see it. Jeremiah turned this whole matter over to God.

Some commentators have criticized Jeremiah and said he should have prayed "Forgive them." We do not agree. There is a place for turning the whole matter over to God and asking God to let you see Him pour out His vengeance on those who are doing evil. In fact, in view of God's response in the very next verses, we believe this was exactly the appropriate prayer.

Warning Message #9 - God reveals what He will do to those who live in Anathoth who mistreated Jeremiah. **11:21-23**

It is clear that the bulk of the threats coming against Jeremiah were coming from Anathoth, located about three miles NE of Jerusalem. This had been Jeremiah's home town and a city filled with priests (Jer. 1:1).

God says Jeremiah your prayers will be answered. I am going to punish them and the young men will die by a sword and their sons and daughters will die by famine and there will not even be a remnant left from these conspirators in Anathoth in the year of their punishment.

There were some good people in Anathoth who had not been part of this conspiracy against Jeremiah. In fact, 128 men of Anathoth returned from the exile in Babylon under the leadership of Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:23).

Do you know what it was that got Jeremiah in so much trouble? It was the accurate preaching and teaching of the word of God.

People loved it when someone would say they were loved and were at peace. But when Jeremiah came along and said drop your evil or God will drop you, they hated him and hated his message.

PRACTICAL THOUGHTS:

- 1. No matter what the invitation of grace that God offers to people, it has limits.**
 - 1) Invite lost people to salvation.**
 - 2) Invite saved people to confess sin and turn from sin.**
 - 3) Invite saved people to pray.**
- 2. God expects His people to be very serious about His word.**
- 3. God warns His people if they do not drop their sin, He will drop them.**