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## *Called to Speak for the Lord – the Book of Jeremiah*

Help in Discouraging Times

*February 14, 2021*

**Sermon Text:** Jeremiah 15:10-21

**Scripture Reading:** Hebrews 12:1-17

NOTE: This past week I have been asked by several people about this claim that is being taught from pulpits, in books, in churches, by I think the majority of people who claim to be Christians. It is this:

*God loves everyone. He loves the  
wicked and He loves us all. You need  
to love the wicked too.*

I plan to address this perversion of Scripture this Wednesday in the Gospel of John Bible study and I very much encourage all of you to listen to it.

Just what do people who make this claim mean by it? What is this “love” that they insist God has for everyone – including the wicked? Have we seen this to be the case in our study of Jeremiah?

But for now, we find ourselves here in this last section of Jeremiah, chapter 15 -

Jeremiah 15:10-21 ESV Woe is me, my mother, that you bore me, a man of strife and contention to the whole land! I have not lent, nor have I borrowed, yet all of them curse me.

(11) The LORD said, “Have I not set you free for their good? Have I not pleaded for you before the enemy in the time of trouble and in the time of distress?”

(12) Can one break iron, iron from the north, and bronze? (13) “Your wealth and your treasures I will give as spoil, without price, for all your sins, throughout all your territory. (14) I will make you serve your enemies in a land that you do not know, for in my

anger a fire is kindled that shall burn forever.”

(15) O LORD, you know; remember me and visit me, and take vengeance for me on my persecutors. In your forbearance take me not away; know that for your sake I bear reproach.

(16) Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts. (17) I did not sit in the company of revelers, nor did I rejoice; I sat alone, because your hand was upon me, for you had filled me with indignation.

(18) Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Will you be to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail?

(19) Therefore thus says the LORD: “If you return, I will restore you, and you shall stand before me. If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless, you shall be as my mouth. They shall turn to you, but you shall not turn to them.

(20) And I will make you to this people a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you, but they shall not

prevail over you, for I am with you to save you and deliver you, declares the LORD. (21) I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked, and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless.”

This is not the first time that we see Jeremiah bring a question and even a complaint before the Lord -

Jeremiah 12:1-6 ESV Righteous are you, O LORD, when I complain to you; yet I would plead my case before you. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive? (2) You plant them, and they take root; they grow and produce fruit; you are near in their mouth and far from their heart.

(3) But you, O LORD, know me; you see me, and test my heart toward you. Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and set them apart for the day of slaughter. (4) How long will the land mourn and the grass of every field wither? For the evil of those who dwell in it the beasts and the birds are swept away, because they said, “He will not see our latter end.”

Do you recall the Lord’s answer and admonishment to Jeremiah?

**(5) “If you have raced with men on foot, and they have wearied you, how will you compete with horses? And if in a safe land you are so trusting, what will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?”** (6) For even your brothers and the house of your father, even they have dealt treacherously with you; they are in full cry after you; do not believe them, though they speak friendly words to you.”

It is the very same exhortation the Apostle gives to the Hebrews:

Hebrews 12:3-4 ESV Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. (4) In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

NOTE: These verses are very often perverted by the wicked and used against people who are suffering at the hands of some evil person. “Stop complaining. You haven’t even been stabbed or shot yet!”

We don’t want to even imply that such a wicked thing is the intent of these scriptures.

Let’s go back the to the beginning of this section and look more closely at it:

Jeremiah 15:10-14 ESV Woe is me, my mother, that you bore me, a man of strife and contention to the whole land! I have not lent, nor have I borrowed, yet all of them curse me.

(11) The LORD said, “Have I not set you free for their good? Have I not pleaded for you before the enemy in the time of trouble and in the time of distress? (12) Can one break iron, iron from the north, and bronze? (13) “Your wealth and your treasures I will give as spoil, without price, for all your sins, throughout all your territory. (14) I will make you serve your enemies in a land that you do not know, for in my anger a fire is kindled that shall burn forever.”

Jeremiah, as we have seen him before, is downcast. Certainly we can empathize with him. He is, as he says, hated by everyone. By his countrymen and even by his own family and fellow priests. He maintains his innocence. He

has not ripped off anyone. He has not taken, let alone failed to pay back. And yet they hate him. They are even conspiring to kill him. It would be, he says, better if he had never been born.

And he says that he is “a man of strife and contention to the whole land.” Everywhere he goes, he seems to stir up trouble. Arguments. In this statement, we see that it has never been Jeremiah’s intent to be contentious. To disturb the peace. *Some people, including many religious types, thrive on this. They love to cause strife and argument.* We are to put such people out of our midst and have nothing to do with them.

But Jeremiah is not such a man. He takes no enjoyment at all in seeing all of this discord wherever he went and being blamed for it. It is no fun to be cursed by people.

Now, verse 11 is a tough one. Apparently there are some manuscript differences and the translators struggle with it. Check this out:

Jeremiah 15:11 KJV The LORD said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant; verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil and in the time of affliction.

Jeremiah 15:11 NASB The LORD said, "Surely I will set you free for purposes of good; Surely I will cause the enemy to make supplication to you In a time of disaster and a time of distress.

Jeremiah 15:11 ESV The LORD said, “Have I not set you free for their good? Have I not pleaded for you before the enemy in the time of trouble and in the time of distress?”

Quite different, right? Is this the Lord actually responding to Jeremiah’s complaint? *The LORD said,....* Or is it Jeremiah repeating what the Lord said to the people of Judah through Jeremiah? That is, is this the Lord speaking TO Jeremiah, or is it the Lord speaking to the wicked? It isn’t clear.

So let me just give you my opinion here:

I think that this is Jeremiah re-iterating God’s Word to his wicked countrymen. It is the Word of God that Jeremiah had been preaching to them. Namely, that the Lord had blessed Judah tremendously and yet they rejected Him. As a result, His judgment upon them is coming. Listen to the rest:

(12) Can one break iron, iron from the north, and bronze? (13) “Your wealth and your treasures I will give as spoil, without price, for all your sins, throughout all your territory. (14) I will make you serve your enemies in a land that you do not know, for in my anger a fire is kindled that shall burn forever.”

Recounting then the Word of the Lord to his wicked countrymen, that is – the message he had been preaching to them, we see here their mocking resistance to it. They insisted that such judgment would never happen to them, even though looming invasion from the north was imminent and there were signs of that threat which were obvious. The Lord says here that His decree of judgment on them was as certain as the strength of iron and bronze, and their notion that somehow they would escape it was folly. Their wealth and their lives would be given as spoil to the Babylonian invaders. Those of them who survived would be taken into captivity.

Jeremiah continues now with his plea and his question-

(15) O LORD, you know; remember

me and visit me, and take vengeance for me on my persecutors. In your forbearance take me not away; know that for your sake I bear reproach.

(16) Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts. (17) I did not sit in the company of revelers, nor did I rejoice; I sat alone, because your hand was upon me, for you had filled me with indignation.

(18) Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Will you be to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail?

*Take vengeance for me on my persecutors.* That in itself is not a wrong thing to pray for. We hunger and thirst for righteousness and for the day when the Lord will dish out His justice upon the wicked.

Jeremiah 11:20 ESV But, O LORD of hosts, who judges righteously, who tests the heart and the mind, let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you have I committed my cause.

Psalms 58:10-11 ESV The righteous

will rejoice when he sees the vengeance; he will bathe his feet in the blood of the wicked. (11) Mankind will say, “Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely there is a God who judges on earth.”

Psalms 68:1-3 ESV To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. A Song. God shall arise, his enemies shall be scattered; and those who hate him shall flee before him! (2) As smoke is driven away, so you shall drive them away; as wax melts before fire, so the wicked shall perish before God! (3) But the righteous shall be glad; they shall exult before God; they shall be jubilant with joy!

It *was* for the Lord’s sake that Jeremiah was bearing all of this reproach.

And what he says next is also quite true:

(16) Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts. (17) I did not sit in the company of revelers, nor did I rejoice; I sat alone, because your hand was upon me, for you had filled me with indignation.

These verses are an excellent description of a true Christian as opposed to a counterfeit. He loves God’s Word. God’s Word is a joy and a delight to him. Furthermore, a genuine Christian does not hang out with the wicked or participate in their sins. Why? Because he is filled with indignation over this evil. He cannot stand it.

So Jeremiah had been faithful and he is suffering for it, and he has this question:

Jeremiah 15:18 ESV Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Will you be to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail?

I suppose that at one time or another, every real Christian has these questions. Why? *Because truly belonging to Christ and faithfully serving Him in this evil world is necessarily going to result in being hated. In trouble. And it can seem like there isn’t any end to it.*

And we can find ourselves wondering – even though we know it isn’t true – *have I been deceived in all this?*

Perhaps imagine yourself back in the days of Moses and the exodus – maybe this is what Jeremiah was thinking of – and there is no water. But you are there in the wilderness because you believed the Lord. He promised to sustain you. To lead you to living water. But so far, every well is dry. Have you been deceived? Are you a fool for believing Him? The world certainly would tell you that you are.

I know scores and scores of people who have suffered like this at the hands of the wicked. And the thing has gone on and on and on and there seems no end to it. They have prayed and asked the Lord to free them from it and to give them justice – and sometimes that freedom and justice come right away – but in many cases they don't. *You never should have left Egypt. You were a fool to believe all that nonsense.* That is how the enemy works on us.

And now, the Lord's response. It isn't something that Jeremiah expected, no would we:

Jeremiah 15:19-21 ESV Therefore thus says the LORD: "If you return, I will restore you, and you shall stand before me. If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless, you shall be as

my mouth. They shall turn to you, but you shall not turn to them. (20) And I will make you to this people a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you, but they shall not prevail over you, for I am with you to save you and deliver you, declares the LORD. (21) I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked, and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless."

This you see is really a repetition of what the Lord said to Jeremiah on that other occasion when he was downcast:

(Jer 12:5) "If you have raced with men on foot, and they have wearied you, how will you compete with horses? And if in a safe land you are so trusting, what will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?"

*If you return...If you utter what is precious and not what is worthless.* I suppose this could be stated something like this – *Jeremiah, you need to stop listening to yourself and start talking to yourself* (Martyn Lloyd-Jones). You need to recognize that those thoughts you are having about perhaps being deceived by Me, and being tempted to speak worthless, untrue things to alleviate your suffering and regain

popularity, *are false. They are from the enemy.* You need to reject them. Look at this again:

*If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless, you shall be as my mouth. They shall turn to you, but you shall not turn to them.*

In these times of suffering, we can be tempted to embrace lies. Worthless lies. For anyone who faithfully speaks God's Word, there is going to be trouble AND there is going to be the temptation to back off. To start speaking straw instead of God's Word –

Jeremiah 23:28-29 ESV Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? declares the LORD. (29) Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?

To compromise here is what the Lord tells Jeremiah he must never do –

*They shall turn to you, but you shall not turn to them.*

“Jeremiah, you must never, ever turn to them, yield to them, and start tickling their ears. If anyone is going to be saved, they have to repent of their evil and turn to My Word. If you go to them, all of you will perish.”

The power of God's Word to save is *God's Word.* If, because of experiencing opposition, of being hated, of suffering for speaking for the Lord, we compromise and tweak the gospel so that it is no gospel at all, then we cease to preach what is precious and saving, and powerful. We must never turn to them. They must turn to the Lord and that means we must faithfully speak what He has directed us to speak.

And God's promise to Jeremiah is His promise to us:

Jeremiah 15:20-21 ESV And I will make you to this people a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you, but they shall not prevail over you, for I am with you to save you and deliver you, declares the LORD. (21) I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked, and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless.”