

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## JEREMIAH 16-18

When a young man approaches me about becoming a pastor, my advice is always the same... *“If you can be happy doing anything else; then Christian ministry is not for you!”* Ministry is too rigorous, it's too demanding, too easily abandoned. Unless a man has an urgency from God it's best he do something else.

Those who view the ministry as a glam job have it all wrong. You see the pastor on Sunday... he's up in front, he has everyone's attention, he's respected and admired, *he only works one day a week! What a job!*

But what you don't see are the sacrifices the man and his family make... *the fish bowl scrutiny - the unfair criticism - the attacks - the doubts - the cynicism - the demands on his time, concentration, and energies...*

*The disappointments he battles, the demands he manages, the determination he needs, the dedication he has to maintain...* it's not an easy job... and on occasion it does involve more than one day a week!

Yet the job of the average pastor - *myself included* - is nothing compared to the ministry of Jeremiah.

God's calling on the Prophet Jeremiah would make the strongest man shutter

and shrink. Jeremiah made steep sacrifices. He endured tough circumstances.

In fact, in Chapter 16 the prophet innumerates some of the sacrifices God's calling on his life required...

Chapter 16, "The word of the Lord also came to me, saying, "You shall not take a wife, nor shall you have sons or daughters in this place." Jeremiah was a Jew.

And the highlight in the life of a Jewish male was marriage and kids. *God commanded Adam to be fruitful and multiply.* In Judaism it was a man's duty to perpetuate his family - to pass on his land and name.

To remain unmarried was unusual. You don't find a large Singles' Group in a Jewish synagogue... there aren't any. Yet God had a special calling for Jeremiah.

In Matthew 19:12, Jesus spoke of certain people with a similar calling: "Eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake."

I'll never forget one Sunday years ago, a man was visiting CC with an older lady. He introduced himself, "I'm Brother Jones, *eunuch of the Most High God.*"

His greeting caught me off-guard. I had never met a eunuch, *at least one willing to admit it, and wear it on his sleeve.* All I could think to do, was point to the woman with him, and say, "I guess she's your mom!"

*That was probably not the best response.*

It's one thing to be celibate for the Lord, it's another thing to go around telling everybody about it...

The man's boast struck me as strange. *And it is...*

Jesus admitted that it would be weird to people. He prefaced His words in Matthew 19, "All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given."

Apparently, Paul also was given this "weird calling." In 1 Corinthians 7:7 Paul referred to his unmarried status, "For I wish that all men were even as I myself."

Paul wished that everyone could be single - *and not because he was against marriage...* In Ephesians 5 Paul lauded marriage as a beautiful, meaningful union that honors Christ and teaches heavy spiritual lessons.

Yet in 1 Corinthians 7 he describes how marriage mires you down in the things of this world. You get distracted with mortgages, chores, kids, domestic duties. Family responsibilities take attention away from ministry. *A spouse can louse up your service for God.*

Some ministries are better served if you're single!

Of course, there's one disadvantage to being single.

In 1 Corinthians 7 Paul goes on, "But each one has his own gift from God... I

say to the unmarried... it is good for them if they remain even as I am; but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.” In short, if God calls you to be *single*, He’ll help with the *tingle*.

He’ll do something to help you temper the passion.

For a brief moment, I thought God might be calling me to singleness; then I met Kath, *and she looked so good...* I figured if I was to be single, God wouldn’t want me feeling the way I felt about her. I believed whatever distractions she would cause, worth be worth the trouble. I was right. *It’s better to marry than burn.*

But marriage wasn’t God’s will for Jeremiah...

Imagine, being married to Jeremiah. He *did time in prison... he was thrown in the dungeon... he was tortured... corrupt priests plotted his assassination...*

It’d been cruel to chain a wife to a human punching bag. God called Jeremiah to a *hard life and no wife.*

Verse 3, “For thus says the Lord concerning the sons and daughters who are born in this place, and concerning their mothers who bore them and their fathers who begot them in this land: “They shall die gruesome deaths; they shall not be lamented nor shall they be buried, but they shall be like refuse on the face of the earth. They shall be consumed by the sword and by famine, and their corpses shall be meat for the birds of heaven and for the beasts of the earth.” Had

Jeremiah had kids they would've been wartime babies, and likely casualties... Childlessness was God's mercy.

The prophet knew what the Babylonian army did to the children of their conquered foes... **“gruesome deaths,” “the sword,” “famine.”** God didn't want Jeremiah to have to watch his own kids suffer and die.

Certainly, God's family planning for Jeremiah created for him some loneliness, but in the long run it spared him great pain and heartache. Perhaps there's a lesson here for any of you who've battled barrenness, or who long to be married, but it hasn't happened yet...

*I know it hurts sometime... Tears bead up in your eyes when a friend announces she's engaged... Or you've stopped attending baby showers... I'm not telling you to stop longing... I'm just saying **trust God.***

*Father knows best.* Only God can see into the future and knows what we really need. His plans are good.

His plan for Jeremiah was *best for Jeremiah!*

Verse 5, **“For thus says the Lord: “Do not enter the house of mourning, nor go to lament or bemoan them; for I have taken away My peace from this people,” says the Lord, “lovingkindness and mercies.”** Remember, Jeremiah was ministering to a people who were past the point of no return. He was sent to the

southern Hebrew kingdom of Judah around the year 600 BC - just before the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians.

Other prophets had pleaded with the Jews to repent, but they'd refused. Jeremiah was sent to oversee their judgment! Rather than raise the nation from the dead, God had called Jeremiah to officiate their funeral.

This is why God tells Jeremiah not to feel sorry for these people or extend mercy. **Repentance is mercy's prerequisite**, and the nation had refused to repent.

In 15:19 God told Jeremiah, **"Let them return to you, but you must not return to them."** Jeremiah had a tender, compassionate heart. He loved people. But as God's representative, he wasn't to go running after a rebellious people who had rejected God's truth.

His job wasn't to lower the bar, or soften standards to make people feel better. They had to turn to God.

Jeremiah was a man prone to tears. But God had called **"the weeping prophet"** to keep a stiff upper lip.

Verse 6, **"Both the great and the small shall die in this land. They shall not be buried; neither shall men lament for them, cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them."** *Excessive weeping, self-mutilation, shaving the head* were pagan ways of mourning for the dead, and in Leviticus 19 and Deuteronomy 14, God

outlawed these expressions among his people, Israel.

God's people were suppose to approach death with faith. Sure, it's proper for Christians to grieve their loss, *but we don't grieve as those who have no hope.* Thus, extravagant displays of mourning are seldom fitting.

*Especially so for Jeremiah.* Those who'll die at the hands of Babylon will get what they deserve - thus, the prophet's mourning will cast a cloud on God's justice.

**“Nor shall men break bread in mourning for them, to comfort them for the dead; nor shall men give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or their mother.”** Jeremiah was a pastor and it's not a pastor's job to console folks and families that God is judging.

It reminds me of two brothers. Both men were thugs, hoodlums. One of them was shot in a drug bust. The surviving brother came to the pastor and asked him to officiate the funeral. He said, *“Pastor, I want you to tell everyone my brother was a righteous man, a saint.”*

The pastor replied, *“I can't do that. Everyone knows better. I have my integrity?”* The brother promised if the pastor could sidestep his conscience there might be a big offering in it for him. *He needed the cash, so...*

At the funeral the pastor proclaimed, *“We all know the deceased. He was a low-life, a crook, a dirty-rotten-scoundrel, but I can tell you with a clear conscience,*

that compared to his brother here, he was a saint.”

Jeremiah also refused to give a false impression about the deceased Jews who'd been judged by God.

Verse 8, “Also you shall not go into the house of feasting to sit with them, to eat and drink.”

For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: “Behold, I will cause to cease from this place, before your eyes and in your days, the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride.” Jeremiah was forbidden from attending funerals or weddings. Again, *excessive mourning* or *mirth* would give the wrong impression.

Their funerals were a denial of why God had judged. Their weddings were a denial that God would judge.

The point being, Jeremiah was God's spokesman. It mattered *what he did* and *where he went*. People drew conclusions about God based on Jeremiah's actions. As God's representative he had greater responsibility.

As a pastor I sense this same obligation. Rarely, do I sit in the bar area of a restaurant. I'm aware that if I'm seen there, someone can draw the wrong conclusion.

I've declined to attend weddings where I felt the marriage was unbiblical. I didn't



want folks interpreting my presence as God's stamp of approval...

I've opted out of parties that I knew would get out of hand for the same reason... *When you represent God in the eyes of people you have more to think about!*

Jeremiah knew disaster was at the door - *he couldn't just keep a normal schedule as if nothing was wrong!*

Verse 10, "And it shall be, when you show this people all these words, and they say to you, 'Why has the Lord pronounced all this great disaster against us? Or what is our iniquity? Or what is our sin that we have committed against the Lord our God?' then you shall say to them, 'Because your fathers have forsaken Me,' says the Lord; 'they have walked after other gods and have served them and worshiped them, and have forsaken Me and not kept My law. And you have done worse than your fathers, for behold, each one follows the dictates of his own evil heart, so that no one listens to Me.'" Here was God's beef with the people. They had turned a deaf ear to Him, and followed after idols.

"Therefore I will cast you out of this land into a land that you do not know, neither you nor your fathers; and there you shall serve other gods day and night, where I will not show you favor.' Judah will be taken to Babylon and subjected to 70 years of hard labor - of bondage.

Yet in the midst of God's judgment, He shines a light... "Therefore behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "that it shall no more be said, 'The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,' but, 'The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.' For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers."

Israel was born out of bondage. The birth of the nation occurred when God brought them out of Egypt. Throughout the OT the exodus was their birthmark.

But from now on, God will establish a new starting point. Yes, they'll be carted off to a pagan land, but God won't leave them there. He'll bring them back from *"the north and from all the lands where He had driven them."* In a sense that spoke of Babylon, but...

We've seen a similar return of Jews in our day. After 2000 years as a displaced people, God is again bringing Jews back to their ancient home. The Jews in Israel today are also a fulfillment of this prophecy.

Verse 16, "Behold, I will send for many fishermen," says the Lord, "and they shall fish them; and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks." These are fishers and hunters of men. In the last days, head-hunters will canvas the globe bringing Jews back to the land God promised.

This is what Jesus mentioned in Matthew 24:31, when He promised to “Send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” A great influx of Jews to Israel will signal the return of Jesus and the establishment of His kingdom.

Verse 17, “For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity hidden from My eyes. And first I will repay double for their iniquity and their sin, because they have defiled My land; they have filled My inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable idols.” O Lord, my strength and my fortress, my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come to You from the ends of the earth and say, “Surely our fathers have inherited lies, worthlessness and unprofitable things.” Will a man make gods for himself, which are not gods?

“Therefore behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know My hand and My might; and they shall know that My name is the Lord.”

Even the Gentiles will know that you can't turn your back on *the true God* for *false gods* and walk away unscathed. There is a price to pay for such rebellion.

Chapter 17, “The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron; with the point of a diamond it is engraved on the tablet of their heart, and on the horns of your altars, while their children remember their altars and their wooden images by the

green trees on the high hills.”

God was to be worshipped on one hill, Jerusalem’s Temple Mount. Yet the Jews were worshipping myriads of idols and images, seemingly on every high hill.

And Jeremiah identifies the problem. What had occurred on *their hills*, had originated in *their hearts*.

Sin has taken an iron pen, a permanent marker, and has engraved rebellion into every human heart...

When my kids were growing up they were great at coloring on the walls. Crayons, markers... the walls were a canvas. And that was no big deal. I can wash a wall, or even paint and it removes the smudges.

What bothered me was when one of my sons wanted to really leave his mark. He’d take the pocket knife his granddaddy had given him, and start carving and etching his initials into the furniture or the door frame.

It’s easy to whitewash a wall, but carving is harder to cleanse. That’s why I’ve always cautioned my kids about tattoos... What looks cool today, might not look cool tomorrow. *And you just hope the guy can spell!*

And this is the problem in our hearts! Sin isn’t just a smudge - it’s even more than a tattoo - sin carves ruts of rebellion into our very nature. This is why the answer isn’t just a whitewash, or a touch up - it’s a new heart altogether. Jesus

told us, “You must be born again.”

The Bible describes the new birth as a heart transplant. The Spirit of God cuts out our heart of stone and replaces it with a heart of flesh. We get a sensitive, tender nature - one that loves God and loves others.

Later in the book of Jeremiah, God will promise His people a new heart - a new covenant... but for now his focus is on how they’ve violated the current covenant...

Verse 3, “O My mountain in the field (or Jerusalem is God’s mountain), I will give as plunder your wealth, all your treasures, and your high places of sin within all your borders. And you, even yourself, shall let go of your heritage which I gave you; and I will cause you to serve your enemies in the land which you do not know; for you have kindled a fire in My anger which shall burn forever.” Thus says the Lord: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord. For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land which is not inhabited.”

The person who departs from the Lord and trusts in men - who “*makes flesh his strength*” and puts his faith in human effort - will be disappointed. Like a shrub in a parched land he or she will be left “*high and dry.*”

Verse 7, “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the

Lord.” God never lets us down.

“For he (the person who trusts in God) shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit.” Jeremiah must’ve been reading Psalm 1. The person who trusts God is like a tree planted by the rivers of water.

They sink roots, and sprout shoots, and bear fruits.

They’re planted. They prosper. They’re productive.

For the droughts will come. The temperature will rise. There’re times when the heat is on... but the person who trusts God “*will not be anxious.*” There’ll be peace.

Jeremiah 17:9 tells us, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?”

Here is why humans cannot be trusted. Our heart is “*deceitful above all things and desperately wicked,*”

Jeremiah doesn’t have a flattering opinion of human nature. Here is his analysis... *nothing is more wicked.*

The Hebrew phrase translated “*desperately wicked*” means “sick beyond cure,”

“**unsalvageable.**” This is why salvation isn’t *a reformation*, but *a regeneration*.

We’re not just repaired, but made new. We receive *a new heart, a new nature, a new spirit*. God isn’t content to reform the old man. We’re new creations in Christ!

It reminds me of the American who spent the night in an African hut. When he checked in, it was dark, but he noticed the floor was dirty. He got a bucket of water and began to scrub - but all his effort only made matters worse... It dawned on him it was a dirt floor.

And this is man’s problem. All the scrubbing won’t change our heart. We need a new heart, a new birth.

At the end of verse 9 Jeremiah asks of the human heart, “*who can know it?*” Verse 10 answers, “*I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.*” Our heart and motives are so deceitful, we can’t even trust ourselves not be prideful or selfish.

*I can become proud doing good. I can give in a way that serves me. Who knows if their heart is really pure?*

Someone said, “*In a day of illusions, and utter confusions, upon our delusions, we base out conclusions.*” We’re pretty mixed up people. Only God can reveal our true intentions - our hidden motives.

And He's faithful to tells us, if we're willing to listen.

“As a partridge that broods but does not hatch, so is he who gets riches, but not by right; it will leave him in the midst of his days, and at his end he will be a fool.”

In other words, **not everything is as it seems...**

Not every bird that broods will hatch a chick, and not every person with great riches did the hard work you assumed was necessary to accumulate those spoils.

There is such a thing as ill-gotten gain. And those guilty of receiving it will be exposed in the end.

Verse 12, **A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary. O Lord, the hope of Israel, all who forsake You shall be ashamed.**”

Notice, the Lord's throne is a high throne - an elevated perch. That's means anywhere you go from God it's downhill.

He says, **“Those who depart from Me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters.”** The NT teaches us that those who trust in the Lord, their names are written in heaven, in the Lamb's Book of Life. In contrast, here we learn that those who depart from the Lord their names will be written in the earth - literally, in the dust.

Remember when Jesus confronted those who were ready to stone the woman



taken into adultery, He stooped down and doodled in the dust. Perhaps He wrote the names of the bystanders - *or even this verse.*

Verse 14, *Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for You are my praise.*

Indeed they say to me, “Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come now!” As for me, I have not hurried away from being a shepherd who follows You, nor have I desired the woeful day; You know what came out of my lips; it was right there *before You.*” Jeremiah had been a faithful messenger of God - a faithful shepherd of God’s flock. He prophesied God’s coming judgment, but he had taken no pleasure in *“the woeful day.”*

“Do not be a terror to me; You are my hope in the day of doom. Let them be ashamed who persecute me, but do not let me be put to shame; let them be dismayed, but do not let me be dismayed. Bring on them the day of doom, and *destroy them with double destruction!*” Jeremiah asks God to vindicate him, and to bring on his enemies *“double destruction!”*

In the NT Jesus will instruct us to love our enemies, do good to them, pray for those who persecute you...

“Thus the Lord said to me: “Go and stand in the gate of the children of the

people, by which the kings of Judah come in and by which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem; and say to them, ‘Hear the word of the Lord, you kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who enter by these gates.’ In ancient times, the gates were the city center, the hub.

Go there and say, “Thus says the Lord: “Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; nor carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, nor do any work, but hallow the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers.” Keeping the Sabbath was a reminder to the Jews of God’s *creation and covenant*.

The Sabbath *originated at creation* (God worked six days and rested on the seventh.) And the Sabbath was *codified in the covenant*, or in the Law given to Moses.

Thus, in the OT keeping the Sabbath was acknowledging God as your Creator and Redeemer. It was an integral part of pledging your allegiance to Him.

Yet in verse 23 the opposite was occurring, “But they did not obey nor incline their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear nor receive instruction.

“And it shall be, if you heed Me carefully,” says the Lord, “to bring no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but hallow the Sabbath day, to do no work in it, then shall enter the gates of this city kings and princes sitting on

the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their princes, accompanied by the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this city shall remain forever.” God says obey me, and I’ll establish My kingdom forever.

“And they shall come from the cities of Judah and from the places around Jerusalem, from the land of Benjamin and from the lowland, from the mountains and from the South, bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, grain offerings and incense, bringing sacrifices of praise to the house of the Lord.”

Notice, the beautiful terminology, “*sacrifices of praise.*” This is what God desires today.

Now that Jesus, the true Lamb of God, has been offered up for the sins of the world, God no longer desires animal sacrifices, but “*sacrifices of praise.*”

God loves it when we *sing of His greatness* and *shout of our gratitude*. Hebrews 13:15 commands us, “Let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.”

The chapter closes with a warning, verse 27, “But if you will not heed Me to hallow the Sabbath day, such as not carrying a burden when entering the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.””

Chapter 18, “The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying: “Arise and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause you to hear My words.”

Chapters 18 and 19 go together. Jeremiah 18 is God's word to the prophet. It's a personal message to the man... Chapter 19 is His word to the Jewish nation.

Both chapters utilize the same idiom of the potter and his clay vessels, but they convey different ideas...

Verse 3, “Then I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was, making something at the wheel. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make.” Often Scripture uses the picture of the potter and clay.

In the OT, it portrays God’s relationship with Israel.

In the NT, Jesus is the potter and we are the clay.

When my last son was born I gave him the middle name “Clay” - for it’s my desire that the Lord take his life and mold him into the man God desired him to be.

But here’s the key - *the clay has no say in the process*. The Potter is sovereign. He determines what the clay ends up. The clay is a shapeless hunk of mud when it’s put on the spindle. It’s only job is to be pliable. It’s the Potter who softens, molds, and shapes.

He applies His artistic genius to His design. And what results is a priceless piece of art. A vessel that now reflects the will and personality of the Potter.

As a Christian you are the clay and Jesus the potter.

This is how God saw the nation Judah. Jeremiah saw the Potter take a jar that was marred. He reheated it, and put it back on the spindle to make a new vessel.

This is what God was doing with Judah. Verse 5, “Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: “O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?” says the Lord. “Look, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel!”

The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it.” Even at this late hour, there was still hope that judgment could be averted. This is why Jeremiah is called, “The eleventh hour prophet.”

“And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it.” It works both ways. Repentance will avert judgment, and the lack thereof will bring it on.

The point is, what happens to the clay depends on its pliability. Too brittle and it will be broken. It stays soft and the Potter turns it into a beautiful piece of

art.

Verse 11, “Now therefore, speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Behold, I am fashioning a disaster and devising a plan against you. Return now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.”’” God was pleading with them to turn to Him.

“And they said, “That is hopeless!” Even staring judgment in the face they refused to repent. We think it’s hard to humble ourselves, to repent, and to submit to God, but in the long run that’s the easy way.

The arduous way is the stubborn life, the hard heart.

They say, “So we will walk according to our own plans, and we will every one obey the dictates of his evil heart.” Therefore thus says the Lord: “Ask now among the Gentiles, who has heard such things? The virgin of Israel has done a very horrible thing.” Even the Gentiles could see the folly of God’s people. They’ll tell you it makes no sense to reject God for idols.

“Will a man leave the snow water of Lebanon, which comes from the rock of the field? Will the cold flowing waters be forsaken for strange waters?” In verse 14, “*Rock of the field*” is the Syrian name for Mount Hermon, the tallest and northernmost peak in Israel.

When snow melts on the mountaintop, water runs into the surrounding streams.

It's the perfect drinking water - cool, pure, refreshing... Who would swap water from the mountain for "*strange*" or polluted water?

Yet this is what we do when we turn from God's provision and sip from the entertainment of this world. We're trying to refresh ourselves with the wrong water.

Verse 15, "Because My people have forgotten Me, they have burned incense to worthless idols. And they have caused themselves to stumble in their ways, from the ancient paths, to walk in pathways and not on a highway..." Here was the nation's problem - they left "*the ancient paths*" - the teachings of their fathers.

Truth is always *timeless... eternal... immutable*. The truth is always "*the ancient path*." Remember the jingle, "What's true is not new, and what's new is not true."

The Jews chose the wrong path "to make their land desolate and a perpetual hissing; everyone who passes by it will be astonished and shake his head."

God's people should've been the most blessed on earth. Yet the other nations scoffed and hissed at them. *Why were they the object of scorn and destruction?*

God answers those nations, "I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy; I will show them the back and not the face in the day of their calamity."

God had turned His back to Judah - not His face.

“Then they said, “Come and let us devise plans against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come and let us attack him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.”

Jeremiah has had some tough words for the priests and people of Jerusalem. He’s uttered some blistering judgments. And his enemies won’t take it lying down. *The persecution against Jeremiah is about to intensify.*

He’s beginning to feel the heat, as he cries out to God in verse 19, “Give heed to me, O Lord, and listen to the voice of those who contend with me! Shall evil be repaid for good? For they have dug a pit for my life. Remember that I stood before You to speak good for them, to turn away Your wrath from them.” Jeremiah points out to God the good guys and the bad guys.

He’s the one who’s been faithful and spoken good. His enemies are the evildoers who’ve plotted his harm.

He’s expecting God to *protect him and punish them.*

“Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and pour out their blood by the force of the sword; let their wives become widows and bereaved of their children. Let their men be put to death, their young men be slain by the sword in battle. Let a cry be heard from their houses, when You bring a troop suddenly



upon them; for they have dug a pit to take me, and hidden snares for my feet. Yet, Lord, You know all their counsel which is against me, to slay me. Provide no atonement for their iniquity, nor blot out their sin from Your sight; but let them be overthrown before You. Deal thus with them in the time of Your anger.” We know Jeremiah loved the people. He cried for them at times.

But here he’s not in a lovey-dovey mood. He’s angry and upset. It’s hard to love your enemies!

In fact, loving your enemies is impossible.

Jeremiah did the best he could to love, *but this OT saint didn’t have the advantage of the NT believer.*

The type of love that’s kind to one’s enemies comes from God, not us. It’s supernatural love. It’s the result of grace - the new nature He puts inside us. Jeremiah had an excuse not to love - he lacked that new nature.

*What’s our excuse? We have the love of Christ!*