

Jeremiah 15

Read Jeremiah 15:1-4: The children of Israel wanted Moses to represent them before God; instead of dealing directly with him. God is telling them that they cannot hide behind their intermediaries.

*As all the people witnessed the signs of God's presence—the blast of the ram's horn, the roaring thunder, the flashing lightning, and the smoke-covered mountain—they shook with fear and astonishment and wisely kept their distance. **Israelites** (to Moses): We are afraid to have God speak directly to us; we are certain that we will die. You speak to us instead; we promise to listen. (Exodus 20)*

We talked about God starting out his ramping judgments against Judah with a famine. God had tried to get through to them with the words of the prophets for many generations. Now he is turning up the heat beyond famine. He is now including the sword of death, continuing famine, and slavery. We have a lot of latitude to do the right thing. When we ignore God's direction, we invite big problems. The interesting thing is that God is patient, but once the judgements begin there is no telling how long they will last, or how bad they get. That is a place where nobody wants to be.

God is not looking for a mere prayer to make the harsh conditions stop. He is not looking for a *tap out*. He is looking for a total change in trajectory and personal priorities evidenced in our daily lives. Getting caught is irrelevant. Repentance has various levels.

- The first level is: “I am sorry that I got caught; please let me go now”.
- The next level of repentance is “I promise that I will not do this again. It was wrong”.
- The only acceptable repentance that God considers includes a complete change of heart about idolatry, adultery and sin. We want to come close to God now. We do not want to do anything to upset God or harm others. The specifics of any violation is not the point. In fact, we could unintentionally violate the Law and not know it. God is not as concerned about that.

This is not unlike the rogue nations who violate their neighbors until the United States steps in and gives them an ultimatum to stop. They thumb their nose at us until the bombs start to drop; then they quickly use the media to mischaracterize us as brutes imposing our will abroad. Then they stop, until we move back out of the area, only to return to their first evil deeds. It is playing a dangerous game with the authorities of justice. This is not repentance, or a change of heart. it is a pain relief strategy.

There is a similar situation described in the New Testament. God destroyed Tyre and Sidon because they became prideful and self-absorbed. Jesus told said that Tyre and Sidon would not have been wiped out by Nebuchadnezzar and Alexander the Great if they had seen the works of Jesus along the Sea of Galilee. So why didn't he? After all, God desires that no man be

destroyed. We need to differentiate between *physical destruction* and *spiritual destruction*. What is not being said is that Tyre and Sidon would have been places of spiritual renewal and salvation. They would have just realized that they were in the presence of spiritual power and consequences. They would have at least shown respect and played the part as required.

Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you." (Matthew 11:20-24)

God tells them that nobody can vouch for them or divert the coming judgements. Religion rests on association with good luck charms, and nearness to important people. Nobody can keep God from doing what he has promised.

The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. (Ezekiel 18:20)

How does this compare with the requirement to intercede for sinners to come to repentance? We do not know when a person is beyond repenting...but God does. We should always pray for sinners. Even if Moses or Samuel prayed for them, it would not stop all of these corrections and destruction coming their way. Why does he use Moses and Samuel as candidates to intercede for their people? There is a similar verse in Ezekiel about how Noah, Daniel and Job could not convince God to stop the judgements.

The word of the LORD came again to me, saying: "Son of man, when a land sins against Me by persistent unfaithfulness, I will stretch out My hand against it; I will cut off its supply of bread, send famine on it, and cut off man and beast from it. Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness," says the Lord GOD. (Ezekiel 14:12-14)

Moses was unique because he spoke to God face to face.

So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle. (Exodus 33:11)

Jesus was compared to Moses in some ways.

"The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, (Deuteronomy 18:15)

Samuel heard God's voice at a time when no prophet had communication with God. Samuel is also compared to Jesus in some ways.

But Samuel ministered before the LORD, even as a child, wearing a linen ephod.... And the child Samuel grew in stature, and in favor both with the LORD and men.... those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.... Then I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who shall do according to what is in My heart and in My mind. I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk before My anointed forever. (1 Samuel 2 various)

Why is King Manasseh called out as being *the straw that broke the camel's back*? He was the worst of the worst. Israel had no good kings (except David). Judah had a few good kings.

Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hephzibah. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; he raised up altars for Baal, and made a wooden image, as Ahab king of Israel had done; and he worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. He also built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "In Jerusalem I will put My name." And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. Also he made his son pass through the fire, practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft, and consulted spiritists and mediums. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. He even set a carved image of Asherah that he had made, in the house of which the LORD had said to David and to Solomon his son, "In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever;... "Because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominations (he has acted more wickedly than all the Amorites who were before him, and has also made Judah sin with his idols), (2 Kings 2 various)

Even so, God gives us leaders according to our behavior. He wants us to see our effect on others.

"I will give children to be their princes, And babes shall rule over them.... For Jerusalem stumbled, And Judah is fallen, Because their tongue and their doings Are against the LORD,... The look on their countenance witnesses against them, And they declare their sin as Sodom; They do not hide it. Woe to their soul! For they have brought evil upon themselves.... For they shall eat the fruit of their doings.... (Isaiah 3)

Read Jeremiah 15:5-9: God is asking a rhetorical question to the residents of Jerusalem. "Who is going to help you, if I don't"? All of these infatuations with wealthy and powerful countries have blown up in your face; and become your worst nightmare. You don't have enough sense to realize that you are the bait in your own trap. God says that he is just tired of restraining himself from bringing an end to them. I was the only one who was truly in your corner.

God compares what he is doing to a farmer winnowing his grain. This is how wheat grain separates from the inedible chaff. In other words, their lives have been thrown around and tossed all over the place to separate the useful part from the trash in their lives.



All of this is a precursor to Lamentations. Lamentations was written after the fact; while Jeremiah was written as a lead up. Jeremiah was written between 626-587 BC. Lamentations was written between 586-575 BC (after the fall of Jerusalem).

Read Jeremiah 15:10-18: Jeremiah is beginning to sound like Job. He seems to be regretting his own existence. He feels like he is alone in his quest to honor God and save his people. He knows that everyone hates him. That is why Jeremiah refers to *his burdens* not so much *his visions*. Interestingly, Daniel and Jeremiah and Job all experienced some serious and extended low points. Jeremiah has to get onto God's page to experience joy. He thinks that he actually is on God's page in doing this. The role of the prophet is too big for him in the flesh.

But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" So He said, "I will certainly be with you. (Exodus 3)

Jeremiah refers to the pointless resistance to a superior force of justice, sent by God. It is a metaphor pertaining to the current metal technology differences between Israel and the Babylonians. The Chaldeans coming from the north would be as much too hard for them to engage with, as the northern iron was superior in strength to the common metal of that kind."

The children of Israel were abusing the poor and cheating the widows out of their properties. It is perfect justice to make the children of Israel homeless and disconnected from any property they had. They were being manhandled in the exact way they had shown no mercy.

For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. (James 2:13)

Jeremiah is frustrated and afraid and angry. Why is a faithful man so connected to the results of this misconduct? Shouldn't he be living the good life? Why does he have to deal with all of this nonsense? Perhaps it is a misunderstanding of our roles on earth. Is it to enjoy life or glorify God? Those two things normally go hand in hand; but sometimes they do not.

Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, "Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth." So I went to the angel and said to him, "Give me the little book." And he said to me, "Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth." Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But

when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter. And he said to me, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.” (Revelation 10)