

Jeremiah 16

Read Jeremiah 16:1-4: Our vertical relationship must always rise above all family love. God is teaching us here about the cost of holiness. Popularity, personal identity and relationships are on the table. God tells Jeremiah not to get married or have children. We are normally to engage in the culture; and occupy the land. This situation was different because people of the land were destined for slaughter; and any family would be wiped out.

What happens when men beg; and God allows them to get what they want? Tragedy. In this case; it changed a good king's legacy to a bad legacy. King Hezekiah was a great king over Judah. He was notified that he was dying. He cried out to extend his life.

In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.'" -Then he turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, saying, -"Remember now, O LORD, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a whole heart and have done what is good in Your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly. -Before Isaiah had gone out of the middle court, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, -"Return and say to Hezekiah the leader of My people, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of your father David, "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD. -I will add fifteen years to your life, and I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for My own sake and for My servant David's sake."'" -Then Isaiah said, "Take a cake of figs." And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered. (2 Kings 20:1-7)

That answered cry out to God added fifteen years to Hezekiah's life. The fifteen-year life extension was only bad; as it was when the Babylonians got the idea to sack Jerusalem. That fifteen year extension was also when his horrible and depraved son who became King Manasseh was born.

At that time Berodach-baladan a son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that Hezekiah had been sick. -Hezekiah listened to them, and showed them all his treasure house, the silver and the gold and the spices and the precious oil and the house of his armor and all that was found in his treasuries. There was nothing in his house nor in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them. (2 Kings 20:12-15)

Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Hephzibah. -He did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD dispossessed before the sons of Israel. -For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he erected altars for Baal and made an ^[a]Asherah, as Ahab king of Israel had done, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. -He built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "In Jerusalem I will put My name." -For he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. -He made his son pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and used divination, and dealt with mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD provoking Him to anger. -Then he set the carved image of Asherah that he had made, in the house of which the LORD said to David and to his son Solomon, "In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever. (2 Kings 21:1-7)

Jeremiah was already widely-disliked; and now he had no immediate family to retreat to. It was just himself and God. His family-planning notification from God was future pain avoidance; not God's strictness. Some people use the excuse that their family is their first ministry; so they never do anything else for the LORD. Others nearly abandon their family and obligations to minister elsewhere. Once we are connected to family; we have an obligation to them. Jeremiah needed a 100% focus in this sinking ship-environment. Answering to a wife; or dividing his time to raise children would not have worked in this situation. Christian leadership comes after you

take the steps God has called you to. Samuel and Moses blessed their generation. The prior chapter pointed out that Samuel and Moses could not save anyone by their influence or grace. Likewise Jeremiah could not save a wife any more than Lot could.

Read Jeremiah 16:5-13: Jeremiah is being ordered to step back and not sympathize or mourn with those destined for destruction. Instead he is to be completely frank with them. Tough love is a life saver. Being an enabler and to coddle sinful life is to prolong and assist in another's self-destruction. People who will not yield to God's logic can only be reached through brutal life forces to change their mind. He is to tell them that they are even worse than their idolatrous fathers. Turning the shoulder to those who are perishing is the opposite of God's normal way. True repentance can be more-easily tested when sacrifice is required. Sometimes destruction is a fine line between indifference to sin and caring enough to at least go through the motions of repentance:

And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. -And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks. -And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, says the LORD. -And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah. -Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, you backsliding Israel, says the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, says the LORD, and I will not keep anger forever. -Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the LORD YOUR God, and have scattered your ways to the strangers under every green tree, and you have not obeyed my voice, says the LORD. (Jeremiah 3:8-13)

Read Jeremiah 16:14-18: The land must be systematically-cleansed of filth for the future blessings can come. God tells us that the remnant will return after they have paid double for their sins.

You are to comfort them, comfort ye my people, says your God.
-You shall-Speak comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she has received of the LORD's hand double for all her sins. -The voice of him that cries in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. -Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: -And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it. (Isaiah 40:1-5)

For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. (Jeremiah 2:13)

Read Jeremiah 16:19-21: After hearing from God, Jeremiah speaks a psalm. Psalms are men's poetic response to God. Jeremiah has gone through the gamut of emotions; and is resolved to be at one with God's will on the matter.