Jeremiah 16-17 • The Heart is Deceitful

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We're in Jeremiah chapter 16, so please open your Bibles there if you would. Jeremiah chapter 16 is where we're going to be picking up our study as we go through the Old Testament here on Wednesday evenings and the Old Testament can be a challenging part of the Bible to go through. I've talked to many people over the years who've just kind of made the decision really not to study the Old Testament because of the difficulty sometimes in understanding some of the things. And hopefully we can bring some light to that and connect the dots for people in the Old Testament to see God's goodness, His mercy, and His heart toward His people.

Jeremiah is a challenging book in many ways just because God was appealing to the southern kingdom of Judah during a time when they had backslidden so badly, become so embroiled in pagan idolatry to the point where God eventually determined that the only way they were ever going to be free from their idolatry was to basically give them over into the hands of an idolatrous nation. A pagan nation like Babylon, where they would reside for a period of about 70 years and in so doing, bring them to a place where they would finally be free from that idolatry. But as we are here in the 16th chapter, God is still speaking to the people about this coming judgment, it hasn't come yet.

And what we're going to see here in chapter 16 are some restrictions that God had placed upon the life of Jeremiah to be kind of a living message to the people of Judah and that was something God did with the prophets. He would have them live out things in their own lives. You'll remember it could be something as crazy as taking a harlot for a wife or in Ezekiel's case, laying on his side for a number of days, and then his other side for another number of days. And I'm like, God, thank you didn't call me to that ministry. But many times they would do something to portray a message, and you can see that is going on here as we go through this chapter.

Beginning in verse 1 it says, *"The word of the Lord came to me: [2] "You shall not take a wife, nor shall you have sons or daughters in this place. [3] For thus says the Lord concerning the sons and daughters who are born in this place, and concerning the mothers who bore them and the fathers who fathered them in this land:* (here's the message) *[4] They shall die of deadly diseases. They shall not be lamented, nor shall they be buried. They shall be as dung on the surface of the ground. They shall perish by the sword and by famine, and their dead*

bodies shall be food for the birds of the air and for the beasts of the earth." (ESV) And so the message is not a pleasant one for the people of Judah. And Jeremiah is not to take a wife or to take have children as a sign of this lack of life that is going to literally overtake the land as judgment falls upon the land.

And the message of the Lord goes on in verse 5 and following saying, *"For thus says the Lord: Do not enter the house of mourning, or go to lament or grieve for them, for I have taken away my peace from this people, my steadfast love and mercy, declares the Lord."* God tells Jeremiah not even to go into a place of mourning or a place where someone has died so as to bring comfort or peace to the people who are there, because God says, I've taken my peace. I've removed it from the land.

And so, in your case, to go and to offer that kind of comfort would be counterproductive to what I'm doing He's saying, and this is a challenging word to get. But God is telling Jeremiah, this is a time of judgment, this is not the way I would normally have you respond to people. You know, we know from our New Testament perspective of treating people and dealing with people, that we are to mourn with those who mourn were to rejoice with those who rejoice and share in whatever they're going through.

But this is a unique situation in the time frame in the history of the southern kingdom of Judah and God is saying here that I have removed their peace and they need to experience the removal of that peace. Because if they don't ever experience the removal of my peace from among them, they're never going to come to terms with the depravity of their sin. And Christians, can I just say to you that is such an important insight for us to remember when we are praying for people who have gone away from the Lord or who maybe who are railing against, you know, God, who have rejected the Lord.

It's a natural thing when we love someone to want to protect them and to provide a place of safety and a place of security and a place of encouragement. But when someone has walked away from God or has chosen to stay away from God, maybe they were never with the Lord in the first place, but they've chosen to reject the things of God, it is a difficult life.

The Bible tells us that the way of the transgressor is hard, it's hard. (Proverbs 13:15) It's going to be hard anyway, but do you understand Christians, that the hardness of that way is often the very thing that gets their attention to come to the Lord. And yet, so many times I see well-meaning believers wanting to, using a metaphor or a word picture, build a shelter over the life of a wayward loved one or family member so that they don't feel the coldness and the

harshness of the elements. And that can actually be counterproductive to what the Lord wants to do.

You have to remember, Jesus told that parable of the prodigal son and when did the prodigal son come to his senses? It was when life got so hard, and his peace had been removed, and his understanding of his past life was now in stark comparison to how he was living currently. And he was looking at these pigs that he was feeding, and he was saying, what am I doing here? This food that I'm giving to the pigs looks good to me, this slop. Back when I was in my father's house, I had anything I wanted and I walked away from it for this? And the Bible says he came to his senses and he made a determination, I will go back to my father's house and I will humble myself and say, father, I've sinned against God and I've sinned against you. (Luke 15:17-18)

I don't deserve to even be called your son, take me back as a servant, I'll just come and serve you. (Luke 15:19) And he said, cause he thought to himself, my dad's servants eat better than this and here I am a son. So do you see, that's a tough parable. I mean, we can all read the parable and go, yeah, the parable of the prodigal son but when you are playing that out in the life of someone you love very much, that's when it gets really hard, when you are watching someone suffer.

Have you ever prayed for a loved one that they'd be miserable without God? I have, because I know in my own life, that's what it took to bring me to the Lord. And I know there's probably a bunch of other people out there that are just as pigheaded as I am and need that kind of difficulty in their lives in order to finally say, what in the world am I doing? What am I doing? In my case, it was, as you know, it was with my marriage. What have I done to my marriage? What have I done? What have I created here with my own stupidity?

So the Lord says to Jeremiah, don't go into the place of mourning to bring comfort because this is a work I'm doing to remove comfort from the land. I'm taking comfort out, I am taking peace out of the land so that they will come to know that there is a work of discipline that is going on in their midst.

Verse 6 says, *"Both great and small shall die in this land. They shall not be buried, and no one shall lament for them or cut himself or make himself bald for them. 7 No one shall break bread for the mourner, to comfort him for the dead, nor shall anyone give him the cup of consolation to drink for his father or his mother."* Those things are not going to happen in this land, because this is a work that they've brought upon themselves and this is a work of discipline.

And then He goes the other way, He says, *"[8] You shall not go into the house of feasting to sit with them, to eat and drink."* In other words, no celebrations. Jeremiah, as assigned to the people, I don't want you to go and celebrate with these people for any reason prior to the coming of Babylon to conquer them. Because I want to, I'm removing celebration from them.

It says in verse 9, *"For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will silence in 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."* You say, well, why is God doing this? Well, again, it's to get their attention.

This isn't the heart of the Lord, that's what we need to remember. This is not, God wants the richness of life to be ours, He wants us to enjoy the blessings of this life, He wants there to be comfort when loved ones pass away. He wants there to be celebration when people get married and there are things that we are celebrating about life; the birth of a child or an anniversary. He wants there to be joyous celebration.

But in this situation, sin had gotten so bad that Jeremiah was told to withdraw himself from these kinds of gatherings as a sign to the people. And it would probably get their attention because God said to Jeremiah in verse 10, *"And when you tell this people all these words, and they say to you, 'Why has the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us? What is our iniquity? What is the sin that we have committed against the Lord our God?'"* That tells you that they're going to ask these questions because they don't get it, they don't understand how far they've sinned.

"[11] then you shall say to them: 'Because your fathers have forsaken me, declares the Lord, and have gone after other gods and have served and worshiped them, and have forsaken me and have not kept my law, [12] and because you have done worse than your fathers, for behold, every one of you follows his stubborn, evil will, refusing to listen to me." And that's the key right there. There was a stubborn refusal to hear the voice of God and it was throughout the land.

"Therefore (God says, verse 13) *I will hurl you out of this land into a land that neither you nor your fathers have known,* (and look what it says here, look what it says) *and there you shall serve other gods day and night, for I will show you no favor.'"* In other words, you will be thrust into the midst of a pagan nation that has dominated you and they will force you to worship their gods for 70

years, and you will. It's kind of that, it's the same thing the Lord did to Israel when they were in the wilderness.

Do you remember how the people were crying out for meat? They got tired of the manna. We're sick to death of this manna, we hate it, we want to go back to Egypt, we had meat. And so the Lord, through the gracious provision, frankly, brought quail to the whole the land and the quail flew so low to the ground because of God's provision that they were able to just catch them. And it says that people started to literally, and I know it sounds gross, but they started just eat them on the spot without even preparing. And a plague came upon the people and they began to die.

And it says, you want, God basically said, you want meat, you'll have meat till it's coming out of your nose. Isn't that a fun kind of a word picture? But the whole idea behind it you see, is, when you say, I want, I want, I want, I want, I want, sometimes God will give you what you want until the point you don't want it anymore. And that's what happened with the Israelites as they went through Egypt. It's what's happening here to the southern kingdom of Judah as it relates to their love of idols and the worship of these pagan idols.

God says, fine, you've had a choice for these many years and I'm going to take away your choice and you will go into the land of Babylon and you will have no choice while you're there. And I will make you sick to death of these idols until you are finally cured. And as we've mentioned before, it cured them. After 70 years they came back and never dealt with idols again. So God kind of knows what He's doing, doesn't He? Gee, what a thought, huh?

Now we get into verse 14 and 15, I love this because this is one of those things in the midst of the words of judgment where the Lord begins to speak words of hope. *"[14] "Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when it shall no longer be said, 'As the Lord lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt,'"* He says no, no, no, we're going to change that saying it's going to be, *"[15] but 'As the Lord lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them.' For I will bring them back to their own land that I gave to their fathers."*

Isn't that great? I mean, just 2 verses tucked there in the midst of these difficult passages of judgment where God says, you know, up to this point, a saying in Israel has been, you know, as the Lord lives who brought us up out of Egypt.

Now, He says, they're going to actually change that. This is going to be such an epoch in our national history that saying is going to change to, as the Lord lives,

who brought us up out of Babylon. Because that's a statement that was used to describe God's faithfulness and God says, they will speak of my faithfulness now related to bringing us out of Babylon. They haven't even gone to Babylon yet and He's already talking about how the saying is going to change. It's going to be such a huge thing in their national history.

But first, verse 16, *"Behold, I am sending for many fishers, declares the Lord, and they shall catch them. And afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every hill, and out of the clefts of the rocks. [17] For my eyes are on all their ways. They are not hidden from me, nor is their iniquity concealed from my eyes. [18] But first I will doubly repay their iniquity and their sin, because they have polluted my land with the carcasses of their detestable idols, and have filled my inheritance with their abominations."*

Now, Jeremiah begins to pray after hearing all this in verse 19 and 20 and he says, *"O Lord, my strength and my stronghold, my refuge in the day of trouble, to you shall the nations come from the ends of the earth and say: "Our fathers have inherited nothing but lies, worthless things in which there is no profit. [20] Can man make for himself gods? Such are not gods!""*

So what is interesting, interesting prayer here of Jeremiah as he begins by just simply saying, God, you are my refuge in times of trouble and I know these times of trouble are coming. I know they are, but you are my refuge. But then he begins to speak not of Judah or of the Jews or the people of Israel, he speaks of the Gentiles. Did you catch that? He spoke of the Gentiles, that's us. And he said, there's coming a day when the nations, and that's just the way that the Bible speaks of Gentiles; the nations. The nations will come from the ends of the earth and what are they going to say? They're going to say, you know what? We have inherited nothing but lies, worthless things, profitless things, gods that are not gods.

Now, by the way, this is going to be fulfilled, this has not yet been fulfilled. This will be fulfilled during the Millennial Kingdom or what we call the Messianic Kingdom, which is that 1,000 year period of time on the earth following the Great Tribulation. And during that time, the nations will come and they will stream to Israel and they will declare their worship and their faith in the King of kings and Lord of lords.

And the Lord responds here at the end of chapter 16 in verse 21 saying, *"Therefore, behold, I will make them know, this once I will make them know my power and my might, and they shall know that my name is* (YAHWEH, *my name is*) *the Lord."*

Chapter 17, the Lord is speaking in this chapter of the depth of the sin of Judah and you'll find that He chooses a very interesting way to describe it here in chapter 17 as we begin. It says in verse 1 that, *"The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron; with a point of diamond* (and you know how strong diamonds are, right? And it says,) *it is engraved on the tablet of their heart, and on the horns of their altars, 2 while their children remember their altars and their Asherim, beside every green tree and on the high hills, 3 on the mountains in the open country. Your wealth and all your treasures I will give for spoil as the price of your high places for sin throughout all your territory.* (and He says) *4 You shall loosen your hand from your heritage that I gave to you, and 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."* And that word literally means to, and it will burn ongoingly.

So He begins by saying that the sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron and with a point of a diamond. And that is to say that it is deeply engraved in the hearts of the people. We're not talking, and this is difficult for some people to, you know, to grasp I think. The difference between sin that is committed by a believer and sin that is committed by an unbeliever to the degree that it becomes engraved in their heart, and here's what I mean by that. There's a great difference between stumbling and getting back up and living a lifestyle of unrepentant sin. And I think most of us would probably agree that that's true.

But there, you'd be shocked how many Christians don't see that difference in their own lives. They stumble and they relate every verse of the Bible that speaks of sin that has been engraved on the heart and that will be judged by God to themselves. And I hear that from people all the time. And so what happens is, the enemy, of course, who loves to accuse and condemn, that's what he does, gets a hold of those times in our lives when we stumble and fall. And by the way, we all stumble and fall in many ways and at many times, right?

So when we stumble, because we're, you know, very imperfect, the enemy jumps on top of that and he gets you to focus on your sin and he gets you to focus on it to the degree that he convinces you that this is who you are, this is who you are. And if he can convince someone of that, he can get them to become hopeless, to believe that they are reprobate or beyond the ability to even save. I have people write to me who say, "I believe in Jesus Christ with all my heart and that He died on the cross for the sins of mankind but I believe that I am beyond hope." And see, that's a contradiction, frankly, that's just flat out a contradiction. Why? So I say, "why do you believe that you're without hope?" "No, because my sin is just so great." You see what has happened there? See what, see the very effective work the enemy has done? We actually talked about

this a little bit as we concluded our Sunday morning services but this is a very common theme I'm finding. I didn't realize how common it was, but I'm finding it's very common.

Because Satan finds a fairly easy ability to accuse us and get us to focus on the sin of our lives because we're so self-centered. We're all very self-centered and none of you are any more self centered than I am. In fact, I'm probably the most self centered person in this room, but we're all self-centered. And so the enemy comes along and it's an easy thing, easy, easy, for him to just, especially when you fall down. You fall down, you sin, you do something, you know, that's just really stupid and the enemy comes along, ha ha haha, that's who you are. That's what you're made of, that right there, that defines you and we believe it.

We totally believe it because we focus on ourselves and he knows that it's an easy thing to get us to do that. So instead of focusing on the Savior and crying out to the Savior, Jesus!, like Peter did when he was starting to sink in the waves, right? Jesus, save me! Jesus, grab me! You know, we just go, oh, no! I'm done for! I'm sunk! I'm sunk, done deal, there's no returning. Oh, that's just, it's so, it's so sad.

Now, there is a place to understand as we see here in these verses, there is a place to understand where sin becomes so ingrained that it's just, it is who they are. But I've never talked to anybody like that who still believed in Jesus and trusted Him for salvation or trusted that what He did on the cross was real. Usually those people don't give a rip, they don't care about God. You're not going to find them around a church unless there's a funeral or a wedding, they just don't care, their hearts have been hardened. They don't care about heaven, they don't even care about hell, they don't care about anything related to that.

And sometimes that happens, but we need to understand, Christians, the difference between what God is describing here and what happens in the life of a Christian who stumbles and falls and cries out to the Lord and gets back up and keeps walking. Completely different scenario, okay?

Verse 5, *"Thus says the Lord: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord. [6] He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land.""* Now, this is an interesting couple of verses because it's stating a general truth that it is a really, really dumb thing to put your trust in man. But it's saying it within the context of what was happening in the kingdom, the southern kingdom of Judah, which we find about in other places of Jeremiah, and in other prophetic letters.

And what was happening is, they were hearing Jeremiah talk about Babylon attacking them for so long, that instead of believing that what the Lord was saying was absolutely true and they needed to repent, they started thinking, well, you know, Babylon is a pretty strong nation and they probably could come and bloody our nose and beat us up a little bit, so here's what we need to do. We need to start making friends with some of the surrounding nations and we need to gather some friends so that we can stand against Babylon when they come.

So I tell you what, here's what we're going to do, we're going to go talk to Pharaoh and we're going to talk to, we're going to go over there. We're going to get these guys and we're going to get as many of these people together, we're going to say, listen, I know we haven't always gotten along, but we have an enemy and it's Babylon and when Babylon comes into this area, we need to be able to stand, are you with us?

You see what's going on? Rather than turning to the Lord, rather than turning back to the Lord and repenting of their sin, they're going to just try to strengthen themselves in the midst of their rebellion. And so God is saying through Jeremiah, *"Cursed is the man who puts his trust in man,"* or in other words, other men, or armies, or that sort of thing and *"whose heart turns away from the Lord."*

But look at the converse in verse 7 and following, He said, *"Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. [8] He* (on the other hand) *is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream,* (it has this perpetual water to draw from unlike the shrub in the wilderness, and He says) *and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit."*

Why is it that the people of Judah would even think of doing something like going to the nations for help, instead of turning to the Lord. Why would they even do that? Why would they go there? Why not just listen to Jeremiah? What he's saying? Why not just respond? Yes, Lord, you're right, you're right, we've sinned, we repent. Why? Why not? Why say, well, here's what we need to do, we need to go to Egypt, we need to go get some buddies, we need to get. Let's make a big army, we'll be able to stand against the Babylonians.

Here's why, verse 9, because *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick;* (in fact) *who can understand it?"* When the Bible says that the heart of man is deceitful, that means that it lies, it lies. It tells you a lie, your heart tells you lies. And ultimately God is talking about the heart of unbelievers, the heart of the unregenerate. But we as believers still possess that sinful nature

as well as the work of the Holy Spirit that's going on within us and Paul tells us that there's a battle literally going on inside of us.

Have you, do you ever feel that battle? The battle between the flesh and the Spirit? He says that they are at enmity with one another. There's literally kind of like a, errrr, yeah, you know, going on inside of you. We're kind of, I'm not going to say we're split personalities because that's not true, all right, it's not weird. But there is a nature inside of you that is at war with another nature that is inside of you.

The nature of Jesus came to reside in you when you put your faith in His finished work on the cross and now you have that sinful nature that's still there as well and that is why we're told in the scripture that we need to resist one of those natures and yield to the other one. And that's hard, and that's where the battle comes in, doesn't it? Because many of us who, you know, I didn't really start walking with the Lord till I was, I mean, seriously, till I was in my mid-twenties. And so, you know, I had about 25 years of just really learning to live by the nature of sin that dominated my life, and then suddenly I become, you know, serious about walking with Jesus and listening to Him for the first time in my life, and beginning to obey the Word of God, so forth.

And I found myself just falling over and over and over again, and sometimes into some serious sin, even after I came to know Christ. Because I was so habitual about the way I had walked before I knew the Lord, before I walked with the Lord. I had dug these deep ruts, these deep ruts that were really hard to get out of. You know, it's incredible that 150 years ago, there were people making their way from Missouri to, you know, the Oregon coast to the Willamette valley. Of course, we call that the Oregon Trail and you can still see the ruts today.

You can go out and see the ruts that the wagons made that long ago, isn't that incredible? Ruts can stick around for a long time and the same thing is true with the way we live. When we've lived in a life of habitual sin, we get saved and then jumping out of those ruts, getting out of those ruts, man. Have you ever driven your car in ruts and you're trying to get out, you know, while you're going forward and it pulls you back in, you poke through the wheel, it pulls you back into the rut again, you got to just, you got to be willing to kind of do something pretty radical to get out of that rut situation that you're in and so forth.

The heart is very deceitful. Did you notice He doesn't just say, He could have just said, your heart is deceitful, but He didn't say that did He? He said, your

heart is deceitful above all things, so your heart lies to you. Isn't that interesting that we live in a world that goes around saying things like, you just need to be true to your heart, right? You just need to follow your heart, you guys, because then you'll be okay. Yeah, that's like the dumbest advice you're ever going to get, I'm serious. You know, following your heart is just not going to go well for you, I'm here to tell you. Because you are following what the Bible describes as deceit.

And look what He says. He doesn't just say your heart is sick, He says it's desperately sick. So He's kind of, you know, using some adjectives here that help us to kind of understand the gravity of the situation that we're dealing with. You guys know what deceitful is. Have you ever had somebody in your life that just couldn't tell the truth and you kind of came to the realization after a period of time, I don't think they know what truth is, they just lie.

I mean, there's this, they lie, all the time and you learn to understand that if you ever meet such a person you learn to kind of say, okay, all right. And if they tell you something, you kind of go, yeah, and you might nod and all that stuff but in your heart, you know, you know, right. Have you learned to do that with your heart? Have you learned to do that with your heart? Have you learned to say to your heart that's not true, that's just not true, that's a lie. And learn to hear those lies and know them when you hear them, that's a lie.

But I don't feel like God loves me. Well does He love you? What does the Bible say? Well, it says He does, but I don't feel like He does. What are you going to believe? You're going to believe the lie of your heart, which is where your feelings are coming from? Or are you going to believe the Word of God? It kind of comes down to that, you guys, it really does. It comes down to what are you going to believe? Who are you going to believe?

Your heart is lying to you, God told you that. It's deceitful and God can't possibly tell a lie if He tried, who are you going to believe? It's a choice. Like, pastor, what can I do to feel saved? No, no, no, see, that's the wrong question. You have to choose to believe God's Word, it's not a matter of feeling saved. Do you think I feel saved every day? I mean, if I based it on my feelings, I would be an atheist one day and a Christian the next, maybe even the next hour if I based it on my feelings.

There comes a point where we have to say, that doesn't matter and I'm going to believe what God's Word says regardless. Why? Because the heart is deceitful. The Lord speaking here, verse 10, He says, *"I the Lord search the heart and test the mind,* (uh oh, here we go) *to give every man according to his*

ways, according to the fruit of his deeds." Now here Jeremiah speaks again. By the way, verse 10 is important, I shouldn't jump past it too quickly. God says, *"I, the Lord search the heart,"* okay.

When you're thinking about what you're doing in life, think about how God, just understand this, God looks at the heart, God looks at your heart, He's looking at your heart. This is another area I find that Christians will stumble over from time to time because they may see someone doing something that the Lord has communicated to them is wrong and they would go to a Christian and say, you shouldn't do that's wrong.

But it's one of those gray areas where it isn't necessarily wrong for the other person because their heart's in a different place. And I know that's difficult for me to say, it sounds like we're talking about a dual form of morality, but we're not. I'm saying that there are certain things, there are certain liberties that we have in Christ, but not everybody has them. And God looks at your heart first and foremost, rather than what you're doing. He looks at your heart, He looks at the motive behind what you're doing.

He's not as much interested in what's going on out here as He's interested in what's going on in here, okay? That's just an important thing to remember, God sees the heart. If you will keep that in mind, that will be an interpretive key to understanding a great deal of scripture frankly, God sees the heart.

Now, Jeremiah speaks again, verse 11. *"Like the partridge that gathers a brood that she did not hatch, so is he who gets riches but not by justice; in the midst of his days they will leave him, and at his end he will be a fool."* Doesn't that sound something like you'd read in the Proverbs? It sounds like it's right out of the Book of Proverbs. Well, apparently this is some of the stuff that's going on in the kingdom of Judah at the time, and so He's talking about some of these things.

He says, *"[12] A glorious throne set on high from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary."* It's not riches, it's the presence of the Lord among us. And then he says, *"[13] O Lord, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you shall be put to shame; those who turn away from you shall be written in the earth, for they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living water. [14] Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for you are my praise."* Boy, can you hear the faith in verse 14? You hear it? Heal me, and I'll be healed, save me, and I'll be saved.

"[15] Behold, they say to me, "Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come!"" That's what, they're taunting Jeremiah. You say that this Babylon nation is going to come against us? Where is it? Where is it? Why hasn't it happened? *"[16] I have not run away from being your shepherd, nor have I desired the day of sickness. You know what came out of my lips; it was before your face."* And he's saying, everything I said in your presence.

"[17] Be not a terror to me; you are my refuge in the day of disaster. [18] Let those be put to shame who persecute me, but let me not be put to shame; let them be dismayed, but let me not be dismayed; bring upon them the day of disaster; destroy them with double destruction!" So the Lord, Jeremiah cries out to the Lord here. And now the Lord is going to speak to Jeremiah in a section that I have to, here in verse 19 and following, a section that I have to confess to you seems a little bit out of place.

And I'll tell you, not out of place from the standpoint of it doesn't, it's not the Lord's message, out of place chronologically with where God has the nation of Judah, and here's why. What He's going to say in the following verses is related to keeping the Sabbath and observing the Sabbath, which of course was part of the Mosaic Law, which has been fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

But God told the nation of Israel to keep the Sabbath. He's going to confront them here in these verses and say, you haven't done that. And then He's going to say, if you do, I will bring blessings upon you. That's why this message seems a little chronologically out of place, because we read last week how God said to Jeremiah that even if Moses and Samuel began to intercede for these people, I would not turn back from the judgment that I've prepared for them. (Jeremiah 15:1)

Do you guys remember that from last week? That was a very strong word. He brought up 2 powerful intercessors from Israel's history and said, even if they were to come before me and cry out for the nation of Israel, I would not withhold. So, this seems a little bit, maybe that, I don't know if this was got, if it got out of chronological order, but it's worth reading here because the Lord speaks to them.

Verse 19, it says, *"Thus said the Lord to me: "Go and stand in the People's Gate, by which the kings of Judah enter and by which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem, [20] and say: 'Hear the word of the Lord, you kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who enter by these gates. [21] Thus says the Lord: Take care for the sake of your lives, and do not bear a burden on the Sabbath day or bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem.*

22 And do not carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath or do any work, but keep the Sabbath day holy, as I commanded your fathers. 23 Yet they did not listen or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck, that they might not hear and receive instruction.

24 "'But if you listen to me, declares the Lord, and bring in no burden by the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but keep the Sabbath day holy and do no work on it, 25 then there shall enter by the gates of this city kings and princes who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their officials, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And this city shall be inhabited forever.

26 And people shall come from the cities of Judah and the places around Jerusalem, from the land of Benjamin, from the Shephelah, from the hill country, and from the Negeb, bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, grain offerings and frankincense, and bringing thank offerings to the house of the Lord. 27 But if you do not listen to me, to keep the Sabbath day holy, and not to bear a burden and enter by 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 shall not be quenched.'"

So you can kind of see a little bit, can't you? That this is maybe taken from perhaps an earlier part of Jeremiah's prophecies to the nation back when God was giving them more chances to repent and keep the Babylonian invasion at bay, or any kind of an invasion, for that matter, at bay. And yet we have seen several passages here, even in our studies thus far, where the Lord has said, it's coming, it's coming.

So, we're going to stop there for tonight, we'll just stop with those 2 chapters. I meant to get farther, but didn't. And we'll pick it up in chapter 18 with the lesson from the potter's house next time, so let's pray.

Heavenly Father, help us to remember that idolatry is still a very real possibility today. Perhaps not the bowing down before small idols or statuettes, but Lord, we can still idolize things in this world. And I pray, my Father, that among your people, there would be no idolatry, that we would reject the idolatry of the world.

That you would speak to us, Lord, about the fruitless things of the world, the things that bear no fruit and have no profit. And that you would speak to us Lord, about how we live our lives and how we convey to unbelievers what we

care about most. How we show people that don't know you, our trust in you, our hope in you.

Father, we thank you for the reminders that we find in the scriptures. For here, Lord, we see wisdom and truth that feeds our souls. Lord, we confess to you today that we need your strength every single day to stand and not fall. We pray that you would keep us from willful sin, that you would strengthen our feeble legs and our feeble arms, and enable us, Lord, to stand even in the midst of a world that has gotten so dark.

Help us to stand, Lord God, stand for righteousness, stand for truth, and in so doing, be the light that you've called us to be in a very dark world. Help us to shine, Lord, to shine where the light is needed most. We look to you, Lord, because we cannot look to ourselves, for we put no confidence in the flesh. Our confidence is in you, our Lord, our redeemer. In Jesus name we pray these things, amen. Amen. God bless you.