

JEREMIAH 15 : 18 - 21**ACCUSATIONS AGAINST GOD ARE UNGROUNDED !**

[Jeremiah speaks:]

*Why is my pain perpetual--and my wound incurable--which refuses to be healed?
Will You surely be to me like an unreliable stream—as waters that fail?*

Therefore, thus says the LORD:

*If you return, then I will bring you back; you shall stand before Me;
If you take out the precious from the vile, you shall be as My mouth.
Let them return to you, but you must not return to them.
And I will make you to this people a fortified bronze wall;
And they will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you;
For I am with you to save you and deliver you, says the LORD.
I will deliver you from the hand of the wicked,
And I will redeem you from the grip of the terrible.*

What do both the book of Job and the book of Jeremiah have in common? (easy answer--both start with “J”). Ok! But what about content? ---- Job endured much suffering. Job didn't know that it was at the hand of the devil. God allowed it for the purpose of making Job, a man of strong faith, even stronger. The devil thought he could prove to God that Job would turn away from Him. Job did not. Job did feel that God was being unfair to him. He challenged God! In our text for today, Jeremiah does the same. *Why is my pain perpetual--and my wound incurable, which refuses to be healed? Will You surely be to me like an unreliable stream—as waters that fail?* “You're being unfair, God!”

Jeremiah was born about 650 BC. Before his time, the northern ten Israelite tribes, the “Kingdom of Israel,” were taken captive to Assyria never to return. The reason? They had turned away from God to rampant idol worship. In anger God sent Israel into captivity. Meanwhile, the southern two tribes called the “Kingdom of Judah,” were not far behind in turning away from the Lord. God “called” Jeremiah to bear stern witness against the wickedness of Judah, its people, its leaders, its capital Jerusalem. God warned Jeremiah that they would not like his message. They didn't. They rebuffed Jeremiah and mistreated him. God told Jeremiah to tell them that their great city Jerusalem, the Zion of God, the home of the Great Temple—which they now misused—would be devastated by Babylon; and Judah taken captive to Babylon. (This message was more than the leaders could take. Later they labeled Jeremiah a traitor and threw him into a soggy pit, where he was kindly rescued by one of the palace servants.) Jeremiah stood strong in his witness against unrepentant Judah. Yet Jeremiah did love his nation. He continually prayed that God would spare his people, their kings (descended from great King David), the city, and the Temple—as He had in the past. God told Jeremiah, No. His actions were set. Chapters 2-14 explain why. This was very difficult for Jeremiah to accept. His beloved nation Judah, its capital Jerusalem, and the Temple, would all be undone.

Jeremiah was sick at heart. I think you can understand it. What if it were your home, this West River country and the city Lemmon or another city? Jeremiah cried out to God, *Why is my pain perpetual--and my wound incurable, which refuses to be healed?* “Lord God, why don't You answer my prayers for the nation and Jerusalem? I have been a faithful prophet for You. I have taken the “rebuff” from the people. Please be merciful, like You have in the past. Spare us from the consequences of our sin. Lord, my grief for this people never ends.”

God is a merciful God. He is merciful to His children in Jesus, and also to unbelieving people. ---- He sent Jonah to unbelieving Nineveh, to warn them of His coming judgment. They turned to the Lord, repented in faith, sought His mercy; and God spared them. For those remaining apart from Christ, though God may grant a temporary reprieve, yet His mercy will become wrath—if not in this world, then in the world to come. Are you such a repeat offender against God?—carelessly, deliberately, rebelliously turning against Him? God is merciful and patient, but will not tolerate a permanent “snub” against Christ His Son, your Savior. Repent, go to His forgiveness in Jesus. Live anew and apart from sin. Do not give up.

Jeremiah was unhappy with God's way and spoke very bold words against Him. *Will You surely be to me like an unreliable stream—as waters that fail?* “Lord, how can You be so unreliable--like a stream that we so badly need, but which so readily dries up? Are You like waters that fail? I trusted You.” Jeremiah was finding fault with God.

Finding fault with God! Is it ever smart for a youngster to find fault with his father? What about the Lord? Do you ever find fault with the Lord? “Lord, how come our pastures are withering, and “they” got rain? Not fair! >< How come our health has hit big roadblocks, but “theirs” hasn’t? And we go to church regularly. Not fair! >< How come society puts the “squeeze” on our Christian way of life? What sort of good is that, God? >< How come our “Jerusalem” faces ruin, when we’ve tried so hard to keep things to the honor of Your name in Jesus? How reliable is that, God? >< How come death has come to our dear family and those other “dirt bags” live on? You are like a stream that dries up, God. ” Dear Christians, remember how the Children of Israel murmured against God so often while traveling in the wilderness for forty years? How often do you murmur against God on your journey of 70, 80, or 100 year through life? The Lord has sent His Son for you. Christ was punished for your sins, and you go free! Do you complain about how unfair that is? Accusing God is ungrounded! The devil is clever, isn’t he?

The Lord patiently urged and Jeremiah to get his heart straight. *If you return, then I will bring you back; If you take out the precious from the vile, you shall be as My mouth.* The Lord says, “Jeremiah, you are out of line. You need to turn back, repent. Come seeking forgiveness and pardon. It is here and is waiting. I will make you strong in your difficult role as prophet.” *You shall stand before Me. . . . You shall be as My mouth.* “Jeremiah, separate yourself from Satan and his crooked ways, and simply trust in Me. You will continue to be My prophet.” Does that remind you of Jesus and Peter in our Gospel reading today? “Peter, do you love Me? Peter, do you love yourself and your way of doing things (the devil’s way) better than Mine? Put the vile away. Turn to Me by faith for forgiveness, strength, and ability in life. Feed My sheep, feed my lambs.” Dear people of God, likewise your heart and soul belong to God. Do not find fault with Him.

The Lord encouraged Jeremiah to hold his ground. *Let them return to you, but you must not return to them.* It’s all too easy for the child of God to become dissatisfied and take the “easy” life apart from God. It’s all too easy to listen to Satan, to give up, and join the other side.” Consider the words from Psalm 73:1-5, 16-19.

*Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart.
But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped.
For I was envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
For there are no pangs in their death, but their strength is firm.
They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like other men. . . .
When I thought how to understand this, it was too painful for me—
Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end.
Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction.
Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors*

God mightily said to Jeremiah, *I will make you to this people a fortified bronze wall; and they will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you.* “Stand strong. I am with you. They can’t defeat you—no matter what!” A fortified bronze wall! It was about as sturdy as anything could be. (They didn’t have steel.) A thick bronze wall couldn’t be cut with a wood saw, beaten through with a hammer, burned with fire, chiseled out one rock at a time. No way could Satan and his henchmen topple Jeremiah’s message and ministry. God was with him. It is the Lord holds you safe too. Do not even consider stepping over to the other side.

For I am with you to save you and deliver you, says the LORD. I will deliver you from the hand of the wicked, And I will redeem you from the grip of the terrible. How much more assurance could one ask? To be *saved and delivered from the house of the wicked . . .redeemed from the grip of the terrible!* Do you see the broader picture too? Saved and delivered from sin, death, Satan, and hell! Redeemed—rescued at the ransom price of Jesus’ blood and death, free from the grip of the devil, that prince of terror! If you learned right now that you have one minute till death, how much panic and terror would fill your heart? The Easter Jesus, the Risen Savior, the Victorious Lord, says to you, Fear not. “In Me you are a bronze wall and cannot be overcome! not even by death or Satan. There’s no reason to call, Unfair! There’s no reason to find fault.” God loves you dearly and grants you forgiveness and eternal life! Trust Him. Jeremiah learned. Even after Jerusalem fell, he continued to serve God’s people. Jeremiah continues to serves us too! It is Jeremiah who wrote, *“I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope (Jeremiah 29:11)!*

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach---