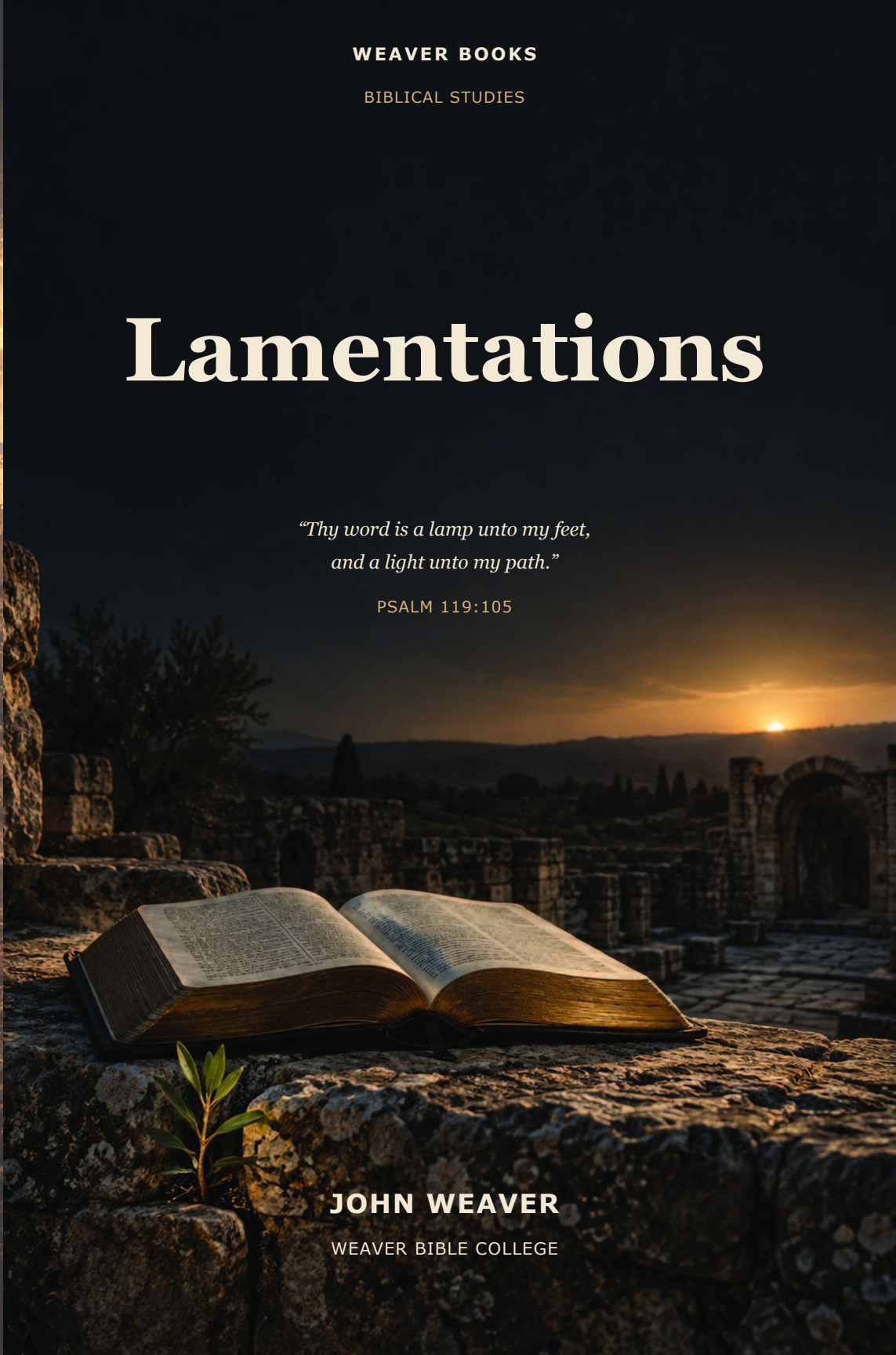
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"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



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Great is thy faithfulness.

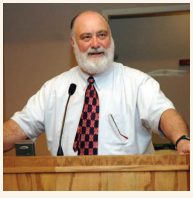
LAMENTATIONS 3:23, EXCERPT

How should grief be spoken when familiar comforts have fallen away? These messages consider lament, loneliness, and hope in the light of Scripture. John Weaver draws upon the language of Jeremiah and Lamentations to examine sorrow without dismissing it, inviting readers to reflect upon dependence, faithfulness, and the grounds of Christian confidence in seasons of trouble.

“The people hated Jeremiah. And he was hated because he preached the truth.”

JOHN WEAVER





John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.

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CHAPTER 1

Left Alone and Without Hope

Let us turn to Mark chapter 8, beginning with verse 22. The title of the sermon is “Left Alone and Without Hope.”

“And he cometh to Bethsaida, and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town. And when he had spit on his eyes and put his hand upon him, he asked him if he saw aught. And he looked up and said, I see men as trees walking. After that, he put his hands upon his eyes and made him look up. And he was restored and saw every man clearly. And he sent him away to his house saying, neither go into the town nor tell it in any town.”

There can be no state, no circumstance, no situation, more horrifying than to be desolate, deserted, and hopeless. There can be nothing more horrifying than to be left absolutely alone and desolate in such a situation.

Introduction: The Horror of Being Left Alone

I have read of parents who have abandoned small children, left them to die. Can you imagine the absolute horror for a child to be separated from his family, from his friends, and just left in pure

agony to die all alone? The child is separated from everyone who should provide comfort, protection, and companionship, and left without anyone to hear his cries or offer help.

I've also read of individuals, adults, who are out in the mountains on vacation and get separated from their loved ones, lost, and die while they're there. Again, without any comforting words, without any soothing touch, it is just about almost unimaginable when you and I stop and think what it would be like to be left absolutely alone and desolate in such a situation. Without anyone to speak a comforting word or give a soothing touch, such loneliness is almost unimaginable.

A few years ago there was a martial artist by the name of Evan Tanner who went out to train by himself in the desert, which was really a bad idea. But he was in excellent physical shape and evidently he was going to push himself to the limits just to see what he could do, or maybe what he could not do. When he did not return at the stated time, a search party went out to look for him and they found him dead.

Can you imagine being alone, desolate, needing help and needing someone, yet not being able to communicate with anyone, knowing that you are lost, hopeless, alone, and that no one is going to come?

Jerusalem's Desolation as a Pattern

If that is true for an individual, whether a child or an adult, how much more is it true when it relates to a city, a state, or even a nation? Turn to Jeremiah chapter 8. Try to picture Jeremiah, known as the weeping prophet, as he weeps over Jerusalem. The Babylonians have come against the city, destroying the city and the temple, killing thousands, and enslaving some.

In Jeremiah 8:18, he writes, "When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me." In other words, there is no comfort; his heart fails him. He says, "Behold, the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people, because of them that dwell in a far country," that is, the Babylonians. Then he asks, "Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not our King in her? Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images and with strange vanities?"

Now look what he says: "The harvest is past. The summer's ended. And we're not saved." The harvest is past; there is no hope of getting any outside or additional food. The summer's ended; you cannot grow anymore. And we are not saved. What is being recorded is that the city is being left alone and desolate. It will die by itself.

Turn to Matthew chapter 23, and then we will go over to Luke chapter 19. In Matthew 23, beginning with verse 37, our Lord spoke to Jerusalem as it would soon face Titus and the Roman army: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not."

“Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” Turn to Luke chapter 19, where our Lord says essentially the same thing. Emphasize the fact that He says, “Your house is going to be left unto you desolate.” Beginning with verse 41, He speaks of the Roman army that would surround Jerusalem and totally destroy it: “For the day shall come upon thee, that thine enemy shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round about, and keep thee in on every side. And they shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”

He went out into the temple and began to cast out those who sold therein and those who bought, saying, “It is written, My house is a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves.” Notice that He says it is going to be totally, absolutely cast down. Going back to verse 41: “And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at the least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace, but now they're hid from thine eyes.” What is going to happen? Your enemies are going to come, and you are going to be absolutely, totally destroyed.

The Strange Acts of Jesus in Mark 8

I have given you an introductory statement and several Scriptures concerning Jerusalem, showing how Jerusalem was going to be absolutely left alone and desolate. You may be thinking, What possible connection could there be between these introductory

remarks and the Scriptures and Mark chapter 8? Obviously, there has to be a connection, but what is it? Go back in your Bibles to Mark chapter 8, and let me show you something very unique concerning this passage. In this passage, there are two very strange acts performed by our Lord. These are not recorded anywhere else in the New Testament, in the sense that He never did them before or after. What are they? Look at verse 23; in fact, let us read verse 22: "And He cometh to Bethsaida, and they," that is, a group of people, "bring to Him a blind man unto Him, and besought Him to touch him." He wanted to be healed.

Now look what happened in verse 23: "And He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town." Why did our Lord lead the man out of town? Why did He not simply heal him where he was? What is the significance of being led out of town?

Then, if you skip down to verse 26, look what our Lord does, very uniquely: "And he sent him away to his house, saying, neither go into the town, nor tell it into any town." After our Lord heals the blind man, He says, "Now you may go back home, but you do not go back into town, and you do not tell anyone in the town what happened to you." Why did our Lord not want this healed man to return to town and testify of his healing, and of the grace and power of Christ?

You remember in Mark chapter 5, the maniac of Gadara. After he had been healed, he besought Christ that he could come with Him, and Christ said, "No, no, no. You go back to your home and to your city, and tell what great things God had done unto you." But here He says, "Do not go back into town. Do not tell anybody what has happened to you."

It is true that there were times when our Lord revealed certain things to His disciples and then told them not to say anything until after He was crucified and raised again from the dead. But this is a totally different situation here in Mark chapter 8. He takes this man personally by the hand and leads him out of town, and then tells him, "Do not go back into town."

What is the name of that town? Go back to verse 22: "And he cometh to Bethsaida." Bethsaida was the town from which our Lord led the man, and after healing him He said, "Do not go back into

town." Bethsaida happened to be the home of several of the apostles. In John 1:44 we read, "Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter." Thus Philip, Andrew, and Peter lived in Bethsaida. Again, in John 12:21, the Bible says, "The same came therefore to Philip which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus." Notice again that Philip's connection with Bethsaida is emphasized.

Bethsaida's Privilege and Unbelief

Bethsaida literally means "house of fishing." You must remember that many of our Lord's original apostles were fishermen. Bethsaida was east of the Jordan and was a fishing village, but it was also a place with a large open pasture. It is called a desert or a deserted place, which meant it was a huge, uncultivated piece of ground normally used for grazing.

It was in this spot that our Lord fed the five thousand. Luke 9:10 says, "And the apostles, when they returned, told him all that they had done, and he took them and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida." Here was this large deserted place, this large pasture in Bethsaida.

You must remember that our Lord performed many miracles throughout the land. In fact, Matthew 9:35 says, "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every sickness and every disease among the people." Our Lord preached throughout the land. He preached in many cities and villages. This was not limited to one place; He went throughout all the land.

But listen to Luke 4:42–43, when our Lord was in Capernaum: "And when it was day, he departed and went into a desert place. And the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them. And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also, for therefore am I sent." Jesus was performing all of these miracles throughout all the land, in many different cities and villages. He was sent to preach the kingdom of God to other cities also.

How many miracles did Jesus perform? The answer is that no one really knows. You could go through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and count the miracles He actually performed that are recorded. But John 20:30–31 explains why it would not do you any good simply to count them and say, “He did this many miracles.” The purpose is not merely to calculate the number of miracles recorded. John 20:30–31 tells us why these recorded signs were written.

We cannot even estimate. The Bible says in John 20:30–31, “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life through His name.” It is evident, then, that our Lord performed many miracles in many different villages and cities. However, some cities were the recipients of more miracles than others, and some received greater miracles than others. Some cities were more favored with our Lord’s regular presence, and more favored with regular acts of His grace and mercy.

Before I begin to answer some questions, turn to Luke chapter 12. I want to show you the biblical principle that is going to be applied to our text in just a moment. Look at Luke 12:48. Here is the principle. Our Lord says, "But he that knew not and did commit things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few stripes."

The Principle of Greater Accountability

Now look at the principle: "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required. And whom men have committed much, of him will they ask the more." What is this principle? For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required. And whom men shall have committed much, they will ask the more. So here is the principle: the greater the light, the greater the blessing, and the greater the responsibility and accountability.

Did our Lord perform greater miracles in some cities than others? Yes. Did he perform more miracles in some cities than others? Yes. So the greater the blessing, the greater the truth, the greater the responsibility and accountability.

Now let me show you. Turn back in your Bibles to the book of Lamentations, right after the book of Jeremiah. Remember that these Lamentations were written by Jeremiah as he saw Jerusalem being destroyed. Each one of these chapters in the book of Lamentations is a lamentation on the destruction of Jerusalem. In Lamentations chapter 4 and verse 6, I want you to look at what Jeremiah wrote, and then I want us to apply this principle. He said, "For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom that was overthrown as in a moment and no hand stayed on her."

Now listen to what Jeremiah said. The punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people—that is, Jerusalem—is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom. Wait a minute. He adds that Sodom "was overthrown as in a moment, no hand stayed on her." When God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, they were wicked and ungodly. He rained fire and brimstone upon them from heaven, and they were consumed instantaneously. It was not so with Jerusalem, because Jerusalem was surrounded by the Babylonians, and the people inside were starving to death.

It is even recorded in Lamentations chapter 4, beginning with verse 7: "Her Nazarites were purer than snow. They were whiter than milk. They were more ruddy in body than rubies. Their polishing was a sapphire."

Their visage is blacker than a coal. They're not known in the streets. Their skin cleaveth at their bones, it is withered, it has become like a stick; they're starving to death. They that be slain with a sword are better than they that be slain with hunger, for these pine away and are stricken through for want of the fruits of the field.

The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children. They were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people. If you went outside, you were killed by the Babylonians. If you stayed inside, you starved to death slowly and surely. It was so bad that women killed, cooked, and ate their own children. Nearly two years, Jerusalem suffered. For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah. Sodom and Gomorrah was destroyed instantly, but it was not so with Jerusalem. They suffered.

Why was the punishment of Jerusalem worse than the punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah? Because Jerusalem had greater light and greater knowledge. They had the truth. They sinned against light, knowledge, and truth. They had the Word of God, the priesthood, and the offerings. It was there the tabernacle and the temple were. They deliberately and purposefully refused and rejected light, and God visited them with a greater punishment.

To whom much is given, our Lord says, much is required. The greater the light, the greater the blessing, the greater the responsibility, the greater the accountability, and the greater the condemnation if you fail. The greater the blessing, the greater the light, the greater the privileges, the greater the responsibility and accountability.

With this in mind, Mark chapter 8, verse 23, tells us, “And He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town.” Why did our Lord lead this blind man out of the town? Some have suggested that it was merely a matter of privacy. It was not. Had our Lord wanted privacy, He could have taken the man into a home, an alley, or some covered place and taken care of business there. It was certainly not a matter of privacy.

Peter, Andrew, and Philip were from Bethsaida. They had houses there.

Matthew 8:14 says, “And when Jesus was coming to Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid in a sick of a fever.” This shows one simple truth. It is true that Peter had moved to Capernaum, but when our Lord came into Peter's house, if Peter had a wife, a mother-in-law, and a house in Capernaum, undoubtedly he had a house in Bethsaida. So would Philip, and so would Andrew.

If it was simply a matter of privacy, our Lord could have taken the blind man into any house whatsoever. It was not a matter of privacy. Let me repeat the principle: The greater the light, the greater the blessing, the greater the responsibility and accountability, and the greater the condemnation as well. When our Lord was brought this blind man of Bethsaida and requested that He heal him, our Lord personally took him out by the hand and led him out of town. What was our Lord doing? He was showing the inhabitants of Bethsaida

that He considered them unworthy of having another miracle done among them.

He had already, as the Scripture shows, deplored their ingratitude, their obstinacy, and their rejection. Bethsaida was a city of unbelief and ingratitude, and consequently our Lord was not about to perform another miracle there.

Jesus' Upbraiding of the Cities

In Matthew 11:21, our Lord says, “Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee! Who? 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 unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you.” Notice what He said: “Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida!” If the mighty works done in them had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

Our Lord says in Luke 10:13, “Woe unto thee, Chorazin, woe unto thee, Bethsaida, for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented sitting in sackcloth and ashes, but it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you.” He says the same thing, worded just a little differently. Now I want you to note that our Lord said, “for if the mighty works.”

These were not ordinary miracles. These were not ordinary works. These were mighty works. Moreover, the word works is plural. They were not only mighty; they were multitudinous. There was a multitude of mighty works that had been done in Chorazin and had been done in Bethsaida, to no avail. The people were obstinate, unbelieving, and rejecting Christ.

Our Lord mentions Tyre and Sidon. Tyre and Sidon were Phoenician cities. They were opulent and decadent, cities of great merchandise situated on the Mediterranean Sea, and they were basically about twenty miles apart. They were cities of great splendor and extensive commerce. They abounded not only in luxury, but in wickedness as well. Since they were so close to each other, they were

known for their ungodliness, their pride, their debauchery, their corrupt morals, and all kinds of vices. Their unrestrained debauchery could, in one sense of the word, have been attributed to their ignorance, as well as their depravity. But no mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon.

Our Lord had not visited them. Our Lord had not favored them with His presence and with His miracles. But He had favored Chorazin and Bethsaida, and now He upbraids them. He reproves them. He rebukes them. They had been given blessing. They had been given advantage. They had been given privileges. And what had they done? They had rejected them. Now He holds them more accountable. He holds them more responsible.

Matthew 11 and Luke 10 teach a very important lesson: there is a time for upbraiding, a time for rebuking, and a time for reproving. Paul told Pastor Timothy, “I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing in his kingdom.” Then he says, “Preach the word.”

"Be instant in season, out of season. Help me out now. Reprove. What's that next word? Rebuke with all longsuffering and doctrine." There comes a time to reprove and to rebuke. Or to upbraid. To get on to. To tell somebody how the cow eats the cabbage. You understand that. There comes a time when you say, listen up, I've got something for you. Here it is. And our Lord flat upbraided these cities. He rebuked them. He reproved them. He says, you're reprobates. You don't appreciate anything that I've done for you.

Your ingratitude and your obstinacy are prevalent. Now, I want you to turn in your Bibles to John chapter 5 and let me show you how their attitude affected the Father. John chapter 5. You know, this is absolutely amazing to me in one sense of the word. We never really think about how our attitudes affect our Heavenly Father. We know they affect each other and our families. But I want you to look at what our Lord says in John chapter 5 verses 22 and 23. John 5 verse 22. He says, "For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son. Why? That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honors not the Son honors not the Father who had sent him." Now watch this. "That all men should honor the Son even as," let me tell you what the impact of the

little Greek word that's translated "even as" means. Here it is. That all men should honor the Son equally as they honor the Father.

Now listen to what he said. "He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father who has sent him." So when someone then has a bad ungrateful, obstinate attitude toward Christ, he still has that same ungrateful, obstinate attitude toward the Father. If you dishonor the Son, you dishonor the Father.

Now let's go a little further. I want you to turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 10 and look at verse 40. I'm just showing you how this relates to the principle at hand. Notice Matthew chapter 10 verse 40. And look at what our Lord says as He sends His disciples out to represent Him. Matthew 10 verse 40. Our Lord tells His disciples, "He that receiveth you, receiveth me. And he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me." Now wait a minute. Let's work this out. Our Lord sends His disciples out and He says, "He that receives you, receives me."

They were the representatives of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was the representative of the Father. So he says, whoever receives you, receives me. Whoever receives me, receives the Father.

The opposite is also true. Whoever does not receive Christ's representative does not receive Christ. Whoever does not receive Christ does not receive the Father. If you honor Him, you honor the Father. If you honor the one He sends, you honor Him. If you honor Him, you honor the Father. If you despise and reject the one Christ sends, you despise and reject Christ, and in so doing, you despise and reject the Father. Our Lord then upbraids these cities.

He begins to upbraid Chorazin, Bethsaida, and later Capernaum. Why does He upbraid them? Not merely because of their obstinacy and ingratitude, though those were sins in themselves, but because they failed to repent and believe. We have a duty and a responsibility to repent and believe.

Granted, we may not be able to fulfill that in ourselves. Only the grace of God can enable us to accomplish those things. But when God extends His mercy and showers His grace, the proper response is repentance, faith, and obedience. Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum refused to repent and believe.

In Matthew 11:21, our Lord says, “Woe unto thee Chorazin, woe unto thee 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.” Our Lord, who says this, is omniscient; that is, He knows everything.

The Mystery of Divine Sovereignty

So our omniscient Lord says to Chorazin and Bethsaida that if the mighty works done in them had been done in Tyre and Sidon—wicked, perverted, reprobate cities—they would have repented. What, then, is the question? Why were those works not done there? If our Lord knew those cities would have repented, why were the works done in Bethsaida and Chorazin instead? Why were they not done in Tyre and Sidon, where they would evidently have been received according to our omniscient Lord?

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said this on Matthew 11:21: “Great privileges were lost on Chorazin and Bethsaida, but would have been effectual had they been granted to Tyre and Sidon. According to our Lord's declaration, God gave the opportunity where it was rejected and it was not given where it would have been accepted. This is true. How mysterious.” Spurgeon made an observation, but he did not really answer the question.

I will go farther than Spurgeon and answer the question, but my answer will be based on Scripture. We must be satisfied with what Scripture says, because there can be no answer beyond Scripture. Why, then, were these works done in Chorazin and Bethsaida, where they were rejected, and not in Tyre and Sidon, where they would have evidently been received according to our omniscient Lord?

In Matthew chapter 11, beginning with verse 21, Jesus said, “Woe unto thee, Chorazin, woe unto thee, 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 shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you.”

“And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell. For if the mighty works which had been done

in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained unto this day. But I say unto you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you."

Why then were these works not done in Sodom? Why then were they not done in Tyre and Sidon? Here is the answer. Jesus gives it: "At that time, Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Here it is. Even so, Father, for it seemed good in thy sight."

In Luke chapter 10, verse 21, Jesus gives the same answer: "In that hour, Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes, even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." Here is the answer.

Why were the works done in Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum, where they would be rejected, and not done in Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom, where they would have been received? Because it seemed good in God's sight to do it like that. That is what He said. It seemed good to the Father to do it in those places where it would be rejected and not in those where it would be received. He is sovereign.

He does as He pleases, and whatever He does is right. Did you hear what I just said? Whatever He does is right. One quick question. How many in Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom deserve to be saved? None. How many in Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum deserve to be saved? None. Do you realize the very fact that God did what He did is a demonstration of His absolute sovereignty?

SCRIPTURE READING - John 5:1-15, 21 (KJV)

John 5:21: "For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will."

"After this there was a feast of the Jews and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. And an angel went down in a certain season in the pool and troubled the water. Whosoever then first after troubling the water

> stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie and knew that he'd been now a long time in that case, he said to him, 'Wilt thou be made whole?' The impotent man answered him, 'Sir, I have no man when the water's troubled to put me into the pool.'
>
> "But while I'm coming another steppeth down before me, Jesus said to him, 'Rise, take up thy bed and walk.' And immediately the man was made whole and took up his bed and walked. And on the same day was the Sabbath. The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, 'It is the Sabbath day. It is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.' He answered them, 'He that made me whole, the same said unto me, take up thy bed, and walk.' Then asked they him, 'What man is that which said unto thee, take up thy bed, and walk?' And he that was healed wist not who it was, for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place. Afterwards, Jesus findeth him in the temple, and saith unto him, 'Behold, thou art made whole, sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee.' The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him whole."

Here are five porches in which lay a great multitude of impotent, lame, halt, blind, and sick individuals. One man had been there thirty-eight years. Our Lord walked up to him and asked, "Wilt thou be made whole?" How many of those five porches needed healing? All of them. How many could our Lord have healed had He so chosen? All of them. How many recognized Him as the Sovereign Lord of Heaven and Earth? None. How many cried out to Him for healing? None. Even this one man did not know who He was. Our Lord walked among all these people, singled out one man, and healed him, leaving the rest in their sickness.

You say, "That's not right." Yes, it is right. Did our Lord owe healing to the one He healed? No. Why did He do that? Why did He not heal all of them? He could have done it. Go back to verse 21: "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will." Then verse 23: "That all men should honor the Son equally as they honor the Father."

In other words, Jesus Christ is God. The one thing that proves God is God is His sovereignty. He does as He pleases, only as He pleases, and always as He pleases. The one thing that proves that Jesus Christ is God is that He does as He pleases, only as He pleases, and always as He pleases. He is merciful to whom He will be merciful. That is what God said in Romans 9: "I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful. I'll show compassion on whom I will show compassion."

If I had a million dollars, which I do not, but if I had a million dollars and gave half of it to Doc, how many of you would get mad because I did not give you half as well? I could not give everybody half, could I? The very fact that I gave half to Doc was an act of grace. He did not earn it or deserve it; I simply wanted to give it to him.

How many of you would look at a man and woman who went to an orphanage where there were forty orphans, selected five, adopted them into their family, and raised them as their own, and say, "Those wicked, ungodly, reprobate people left thirty-five orphans in that orphanage"? No. It was not that they left thirty-five; they adopted five. They did not owe the five anything. They did that out of the grace of their hearts.

It is the same thing with God. God does not owe us anything. The very fact that He does what He does is His prerogative. He is sovereign. The multitudes in John 5 did not know who He was. They did not desire Him, nor did they cry out for mercy or help. And He left them alone and desolate.

In Matthew 23:38, our Lord told the Jews, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Two of the most disheartening and terrifying words are alone and desolate. God can leave desolate and alone individuals, cities, towns, states, and even nations if He so chooses.

In Matthew 15, our Lord had been teaching and preaching when His disciples came and said unto Him, "Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?" But He answered, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."

Let them alone. What did Christ say? He said, let them alone. He also said, “Your house is left unto you desolate.” Why did our Lord take the man by the hand and lead him out of the city? He was showing Bethsaida, “I’m leaving you alone. I’m leaving you desolate.” After He healed the man, He told him not to go back into the town and not to tell anybody what had happened to him. He was depriving them of any and every witness to His grace and mercy. He was leaving them alone; He was leaving them desolate.

Application: Do Not Be Left Alone

Listen carefully. If you do not want to be bothered with Christ or with Scripture, and if you do not want to be convicted and converted, with your conscience pricked, upset, and troubled, do not worry. Christ can arrange for you to be left alone. He can arrange it so that you will not be bothered. Everyone loves to quote that passage: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I’ll fear no evil: for thou art with me.”

"Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." Our Lord only walks through the valley of the shadow of death with His own. If you do not want Him, you can walk it alone; you can be left desolate. When Christ said to the blind man, "Neither go back into this town, nor tell it to anyone in that town," He was saying, Bethsaida, you're not worthy. You've rejected Me. You've refused me; I'll leave you alone. I'll leave you desolate.

There are many applications of this truth. First, we do not value the Word of God as we should. Stop and think. Ask yourself, how much this week have you read the Scripture? How much have you studied the Scripture? How many messages have you listened to? We do not value the preaching of the Word of God as we should.

Have you ever thought what it would be like to be deprived of the Bible? Or really to be deprived of a preaching teacher who teaches the Bible? There are numerous churches across this land that have no pastors, and numbers of them that have preachers who really do not have preachers. I got a call last night at 10 o'clock from a church, wanting me to come preach for them. I said, I'll be glad to preach for you on Wednesday. But I said, I can't on Sunday. I said, I'll try to help you get someone.

I'm simply saying we don't understand the value of the Word of God. Do you ever realize that the greatest curse God can put upon a people, a city, a town, a state, or a nation is to deprive them of His Word? You remember what He did to Elijah when He got ready to curse Israel? He moved Elijah out of the land. When He got ready to curse Judah and Jerusalem, He just silenced Jeremiah. He said, “Pray not thou for this people.”

We're blind and ignorant when we despise and detest the Word of God and the preachers of God. I think many times that the ungodly think, if we can just get away from the churches, if we can just get away from the preachers, if we can just get away from the Bible, then there'll be nobody to bother us, no one to demand repentance, no one to prick our conscience, no one to stay on our backs, and we can just live and have a good time and do whatever we please.

That's basically what the world wants. The world wants to sin without restraint. Can you imagine what it would be like if everyone did as he pleased without restraint? Our Bible tells us in Ephesians 4:11 that one of the gifts that Jesus Christ gave to His church was that of a pastor-teacher.

“And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.” One of the greatest blessings is to have the Word of God taught and preached to us.

Now, here is the only application I want to make today. I know this is not true of our people, but it is true of a lot: If you do not wish to have your conscience pricked and probed and to be convicted, if you do not wish to have your understanding shaken, your mind illuminated, your heart broken, your heart healed, if you would rather be left alone, if you would rather not be bothered by God’s Word and by God’s Spirit, our Lord can arrange it—just like He did to Bethsaida, just like He did to Chorazin, just like He did to Capernaum.

We need to ask the Lord to bother us. We need to ask the Lord to shake us. We need to ask the Lord to convict us. Fanny Crosby wrote a hymn titled “Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior”:

“Pass me not, O gentle Savior, hear my humble cry. While on others thou art calling, do not pass me by. Let me at the throne of

mercy find sweet relief. Kneeling there in deep contrition, help my unbelief. Trusting only in Thy merit will I seek Thy face. Heal my wounded, broken spirit. Save me by Thy grace. Thou the spring of all my comfort, more than life to me. Whom have I on earth beside Thee? Whom in heaven but Thee? Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry. While on others Thou art calling, do not pass me by."

Lord, You do not owe me a thing. You are a gracious, holy, sovereign God. When You show Your grace and mercy to others, here I am: do not forget me. You do not owe me anything, but I want You, Your grace, and Your mercy. Our Lord took him by the hand and led him out of town. Then He healed him and said, "Do not go back and tell them what I have done." They want to be left alone; I will leave them alone. We want to make sure that we are not left alone.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask for Your grace and mercy. I pray that You will bother us and trouble our minds when we think wrongly, our hearts when we have wicked affections, and our wills when we are in bondage to sin. Trouble our minds when we have fear and unbelief. Convict us and help us realize that we need You daily, even hourly. Help us understand the truth of Fanny Crosby's hymn: "Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry. While on others Thou art calling, do not pass me by." Thank You, Father, that You have not left us alone, and that You have promised never to forsake or leave us. Let us know Your presence and power, that we may serve You acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Your name we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

I Feel Just Like Jeremiah

Introduction: The Solemn Truth of National Deterioration

Jeremiah 9 begins: "Oh, that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people. Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people and go from them. For they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies, but they are not valued for the truth upon the earth."

"For they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the Lord. Take ye heed everyone of his neighbor, and trust you not in any brother. For every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbor will walk with slanders. And they will deceive everyone his neighbor, and will not speak the truth. They have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity. Their habitation is in the midst of deceit. Through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the Lord. Therefore, said the Lord of hosts, behold, I will melt them and try them."

"For how shall I do for the daughter of my people? Their tongue is as an arrow shot out, it speaketh deceit. One speaketh peaceably to his neighbor with his mouth, but in his heart he layeth his wait. Shall I not visit for these things, said the Lord? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" When I say, "I Feel Just Like Jeremiah," I am not comparing myself with Jeremiah. Jeremiah certainly was known as the weeping prophet, and he served God faithfully through the reign of the last five kings of Judah, who were Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. Jeremiah's ministry lasted over 40 years. If one would carefully read the book of Jeremiah, he would discover that Jeremiah's day in time is much like our day in time. In fact, there are many comparisons to the situation that Jeremiah faced and the situation in which we face today. Here is a solemn truth emphasized throughout Jeremiah.

All national deterioration and disaster is the result of disregarding and disobeying the Word of God. This solemn truth is emphasized throughout Jeremiah and can be applied to any nation, not merely Judah. Jeremiah presents it immediately and declares it to be the source of all Judah's problems and troubles. They had disregarded God and left His Word. Jeremiah 2:8 says:

The Spiritual Breakdown in Judah and America

"The priest said not, Where is the Lord? And they that handle the law knew me not. The pastors also transgressed against me and the prophets prophesied Baal and walked after things that do not profit." So you have every category of people here walking away from God. Jeremiah 2:19 says: God says, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee. Know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God." Jeremiah 2:30 begins:

He said, "In vain have I smitten your children. They receive no correction. Your own sword hath devoured your prophets like a destroying lion. O generation, see ye the word of the Lord. Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? A land of darkness? Wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee. Can a maid forget her ornament, her attire? Yet my people have forgotten

me days without number." So Jeremiah is pointing out right away the problems that Judah were facing were simply because they had forsaken God and His Word. I believe that a case could be made against America exactly as Jeremiah makes the case against Judah. Jeremiah 2 shows that there was a spiritual breakdown, not just in the people of the land, but in all the leaders of the land as well. The apostasy had developed to such a stage that no one was willing to receive correction. It is almost inconceivable that not one individual in the land of Judah was willing to hear and receive the Word of God.

Jeremiah 5:1–3 says, "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if you can find a man." A single man: "if there be any that executes judgment, that seeketh the truth, I will pardon it."

"And though they say the Lord liveth, surely they swear falsely. O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved."

"Thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction. They've made their faces harder than a rock. They refuse to return." So God tells Jeremiah, "Run you to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem. If you can find one man, any man that will do what's right, I'll pardon the entire city." And of course, Jeremiah could not find one. He said, "You've grieved them, you've smitten them, and they refuse to return." Over and over in the book of Jeremiah, we're told of the stubbornness, the obstinacy, the stiff and hard-necked people in Jeremiah's time. Consider the people to whom Jeremiah preached.

The Stiff-Necked People of Jeremiah's Day

Jeremiah 7:26 says, "Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck, and did worse than their fathers." Jeremiah 17:23 likewise speaks of stiff necks: "But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their necks stiff that they might not hear nor receive instruction." Isn't that amazing? Jeremiah 19:15 says, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon all her towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks that they might not hear my words." Jeremiah was sent to a stiff-necked,

hardened, rebellious people who refused to hear God's word. He went through several stages in dealing with them.

It is understandable how one's emotions and attitudes change when constantly confronted by an unrepentant and rebellious people. One tires easily and quickly when no one listens or wants to change and do right. Look at the mess America is in. The average American—let me go further, the average Christian—wishes to party on as if going to live forever.

The Hezekiah Syndrome: Living Only for the Present

They have no concern for their children or grandchildren. We call it the Hezekiah syndrome. In 2 Kings 20, Isaiah comes to Hezekiah and declares a truth to him.

Hezekiah had been sick, and the ruler of Babylon sent gifts and condolences. Second Kings 20:12 says, "At that time Berodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah for he heard that Hezekiah had been sick."

"And Hezekiah hearkened unto them and showed them all the house of his precious things, the silver and the gold and the spices and the precious ointment and all the house of his armor and all that was found in his treasures. There was nothing in his house nor in all his dominion that Hezekiah showed them not."

That was stupid, but that's okay. "Then came Isaiah the prophet unto King Hezekiah and said unto him, What said these men, and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country, even from Babylon. And he said, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All the things that are in mine house have they seen. There is nothing among my treasures that I have not showed them. And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Lord. Behold, the days come that all that is in thine house and all which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day shall be carried into Babylon. Nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, they shall take away. Now watch. And they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. Then said Hezekiah

unto Isaiah, Good is the word of the Lord, which thou hast spoken. And he said, Is it not good?"

"If peace and truth be in my days." What did Hezekiah say? it really doesn't matter to me what happens after I'm gone, just so that I have a good time and I have peace in my days. That's the Hezekiah syndrome. That's where most people are today. They are not thinking generationally. They're not thinking about their children, their grandchildren, their great-grandchildren. They're living for this day in time. and want to party on right now. Hezekiah did not care about his children and grandchildren. He would escape the trouble. He would escape the turmoil. And that was all that mattered to him. Someone is going to reap that which we've sown. But our present day generation is unconcerned about that truth. How can I say I feel just like Jeremiah?

Jeremiah's Compassion and Concern

The first thing we see about Jeremiah is that he was compassionate and concerned. Jeremiah 9:1 says, "Oh, that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." Other verses demonstrate the weeping prophet's compassion and concern. Jeremiah 9:10 says, "For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up."

"so that none can pass through them. Neither can men hear the voice of the cattle, both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled. They're gone." He said, "I'll take up a weeping and wailing, and I'll take up a lamentation." In Jeremiah 13:17 he tells the people, "But if you will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride. And mine eyes shall weep sore and run down with tears because the Lord's flock is carried away captive."

He said, "You won't listen. It breaks my heart that you just simply will not listen." Jeremiah 48:32 says:

He says it like this: "O vine of Sibmah, I will weep for thee with the weeping of Jazer. Thy plants are gone over the sea. They reach

even to the sea of Jazer. The spoiler is fallen upon thy summer fruits and upon thy vintage."

The weeping prophet saw Jerusalem's destruction. In Lamentations 1:16 he says, "For these things I weep, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me. My children are desolate because the enemy prevailed." In Lamentations 2:11, "Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people, because the children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city." In Lamentations 3:48, "Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people." Jeremiah is compassionate and concerned, weeping over his people's destruction. Consider Jeremiah 9:1 closely.

"Oh, that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." Let me paraphrase: "Oh, that my head were waters" or "Who will give waters to my head?" He is saying that his mourning for his people's sins and desolation has exhausted his tears. He wishes a fountain would open so that he could weep day and night for the slain. His tears are all gone.

I've cried until I can't cry anymore. Who will turn my head into waters? Who will give my head a fountain of water that I can continually weep over and over for the slain of my people?

The calamity Jeremiah foresaw was so dreadful that he could weep about it day and night. He wishes his head would dissolve into water so that his eyes might become an inexhaustible fountain of tears. Verse 1 also intimates that the ruin would be so dreadful it could not be bewailed by moderate or usual lamentations. God's vengeance would exceed common bounds and fill men with more dreadful calamities than they could imagine. An inexhaustible supply of water would be needed for him to weep.

So verse 1 actually sets forth the greatness and the horribleness of the extreme destruction that was in store for Judah and Jerusalem. Jeremiah saw it coming. He knew it was coming. They refused to listen. And so he said, "If I could just turn my head into waters, I

would not cease to weep for them." Is there anything any different today? The answer is no.

There are God's preachers, though they may be few, thundering about the judgment that has come, is here, and is coming. Yet very few listen, repent, or truly want to live holy, godly, obedient lives. Jeremiah 8:6 shows the attitude of the people in his time, and obviously our people's attitude today.

"I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright. Watch. No man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? Everyone turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into battle." So no one's willing to admit that they're sinners, that they've done wickedly. They're rushing like a horse into battle in their sins and in their wickedness. They still despise God. They despise His gracious warnings, His tender mercies, and His multitudinous compassions. They reject His Word. They despise His Son and tread His law under their feet. They refuse to hear the plain, straightforward, biblical preaching and teaching of the Word. They prefer their sins. And they actually prefer to play at being Christians.

It is exceedingly difficult to awaken people who harden and stiffen their necks in sin and rebellion. They are absolutely insensible. Jeremiah 9:1 must be the sorrowful language of many preachers who have preached long and hard to rebellious, hardened people with little or no effect.

The Insufficiency of Human Compassion to Save

Here is a difficult lesson: Jeremiah was compassionate and concerned, but the godliness, concern, compassion, and love of godly preachers are insufficient to turn people's hearts. Many good, gracious, godly pastors—some I know—have been run off from their churches by hardened, stiff-necked, rebellious people who did not want God's Word. It is difficult to conceive, but no amount of compassion or concern from a preacher will save anyone, revive anyone, or make anyone do what is right, biblical, and holy. Jeremiah said, "Oh, that my head were fountains of waters so that I could just weep incessantly." Yes, I have wept and have compassion, but for the most part even professing Christians pass on

unconcerned and unrepentant. No amount of compassion and concern will save anybody.

That compassion and concern may drive us to preach, teach, and witness, but it will not save them. Only God can do that. The second truth about Jeremiah is that he was exhausted and exasperated. Jeremiah 9:2 says, "Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men that I might leave my people and go from them."

Jeremiah's Exhaustion and Exasperation

"For they be all adulterers and assembly of treacherous men." Jeremiah wanted to get out of Dodge. He grew weary of preaching and praying for a people who would not listen or repent. He was exhausted and exasperated. If he could get away, at least he would not be so provoked. Have I ever been exhausted? Ask Alice. Yes. Have I ever been exasperated? Ask Alice. Yes.

For years, I was also pastor, principal, teacher, counselor, and disciplinarian in our church and educational ministry. Every so often, I would call Pastor McCurry and ask, "Are you ready to get your family together and move to the swamp with me?" I never wanted to quit the ministry. I never wanted to stop preaching, but I did just want to get away. And at times I would think if I could just be marooned on a desert island for about six months.

It would really help. And don't think I'm the only one like that. Because ever so often, Pastor McCurry would call me and he would ask, "Is the swamp available? How long can we stay?" I can certainly understand what Jeremiah was going through. David said it like this in Psalm 120, verse 5. "Woe is me that I sojourn in Meshech, and I dwell in the tents of Kedar." Now, the people of Meshech were a barbarous people. They were absolutely wicked. And so what Jeremiah is saying is, "If I could just get away, living among these people is like living among barbarians. I just want to leave." Jeremiah longed for solitude at the same time he wanted to leave a wicked and rebellious people.

Godly, gracious men are vexed. They're hurt with the conduct and conversation of the wicked. Only the wicked can feel at home with the wicked. Birds of a feather do flock together, even Lot. The Bible

says in 2 Peter 2 and verse 8, "For that righteous man dwelling among them and seeing and hearing vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds." Godly men cannot help but be grieved at the sins and the rebellion of the wicked and they desire to get out of the way.

Verse 2 says, "Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people and go from them." Why? "For they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men." They were immoral and filthy. Verse 3 says, "And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies."

They were liars, "but they are not valued for the truth upon the earth." They could care less about truth. "They proceed from evil to evil and they know not me, saith the Lord." They were lost as a hound dog, and all they were interested in was doing that which was wicked. Verse 4 says: "Take ye heed every one of his neighbor, and trust you not in any brother. For every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbor will walk with slanders."

In other words, they were not trustworthy. They were deceivers. They were supplanters, as well as slanderers. Verse 5 says: "And they will deceive every one his neighbor, and will not speak the truth. And they have taught their tongue to speak lies and weary themselves to commit iniquity." They wear themselves out in sin. And then he said in verse 6, "Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit. Through deceit" "they refuse to know me, saith the Lord." Verse 8 says, "Their tongue is an arrow shot out. It speaketh deceit. One speaketh peaceably to his neighbor with his mouth, but in his heart he layeth wait." I understand why Jeremiah wanted to get away. I wouldn't want to be around people like that either. Jeremiah was not the most loved preacher in the world.

The Hatred and Persecution Jeremiah Endured

The people hated Jeremiah. And he was hated because he preached the truth. In Jeremiah, all the false prophets who prophesied lies were well-liked and well-loved and well-respected and were in the palace, by the way. But Jeremiah was hated. He was lied about. He was ridiculed. He was cast into prison and into dungeons.

His life was threatened. Jeremiah 20:7 says, "O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived. Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed. I am in derision daily. Watch, everyone mocketh me."

"For since I spake, I cried out. I cried violence and spoil, because the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me and a derision daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of him nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay."

"For I have heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watch for my halting, saying, Peradventure, he will be enticed, and we will prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge upon him." All they wanted Jeremiah to do was to fall. They lied about him. They slandered about him. Jeremiah 32:2 says: "For then the king of Babylon's army besieged Jerusalem, and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison, which was in the king of Judah's house." So now he's thrown in prison. Jeremiah 38:6 says: "Then took they Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah, the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison. And they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon, there was no water but mire. So Jeremiah sunk in the mire."

He was not just in prison but in a dungeon. Jeremiah 26:11 shows where they tried to kill him: "Then spake the priests and the prophets and the princes and all the people saying, This man is worthy to die. Why? For he has prophesied against this city. As you have heard with your ears, then spake Jeremiah to all the princes and to the people saying, The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city, all the words that you have heard. Therefore now amend your ways and your doings and obey the voice of the Lord your God. And the Lord will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you. As for me."

"Behold, I am in your hand. Do with me as seemeth good, and meet unto you. But know you for certain that if you put me to death, you shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves and upon this city, upon the inhabitants thereof. For of a truth the Lord hath sent

me unto you to speak all these words in your ears." So they were planning on putting him to death.

All Jeremiah wanted to do in Jeremiah chapter 9 verse 2 was just get away, just leave them. "All you want's your sin, all you want's your rebellion, fine. If I could get me a little wayfaring house out in the desert somewhere, if I can find a little inn where I can rent a little room, or if I can find some widow's house like the widow woman of Zarephath, I believe it was, who made that little room for Elijah and his helper. And he would just go there and stay whenever he needed to go there and stay. If I could just get away." See what happened when he tried to get away. Jeremiah 37:11 says: "And it came to pass that when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army, then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin to separate himself thence in the midst of the people."

He has the opportunity to leave. "And when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the ward was there whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah, and he took Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans. Then said Jeremiah, It is false. I fall not away to the Chaldeans. But he hearkened not to him. So Irijah took Jeremiah and brought him to the princes. Wherefore, the princes were wroth with Jeremiah and smote him and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe, for they had made that the prison. When Jeremiah was entered into the dungeon and into the cabins, Jeremiah had remained there many days." When he finally got the opportunity to leave, they lied against him and threw him back in the dungeon in the prison.

When David was falsely accused by Saul, he had to live in the desert and wilderness. There he longed for the courts of the Lord's house. Remember the psalm where he speaks about the little sparrows building nests and the spiders building webs there? He said, "If I could be like one of those little birds, if I could be like a spider and just be in the house of the Lord." Saul was chasing him, and he could not return to Jerusalem. David was in the wilderness desiring the Lord's house; Jeremiah was in the Lord's house desiring the wilderness, to get away from the wicked pretending to be the

Lord's people. Sometimes godly men need to get away, and sometimes their people drive them away.

Jeremiah's Displeasure and Discernment: Praying for Judgment

Jeremiah said, "If I just had a lodging place in the wilderness, that's what I would need." Thirdly, he was displeased and discerning. Jeremiah 18 shows the progress in his thinking, discernment, and desire. He begins with, "If I could just weep uncontrollably, unendingly for my people, that's what I'd want." Then he is so exasperated and exhausted he wants to leave. They won't sin. They don't want truth. Let them have it. Displeased with the people's rejection of his person and message, he eventually discerned the right conclusion.

Jeremiah discerned that the only thing left was judgment. The people hated him, would not listen or repent, and followed lies and deceit. Jeremiah 18:18 says, "Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices 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 smite him with the tongue and let us not give heed to any of his words." They planned to destroy him. The law would not perish, counsel would not fall from the wise, and the word would not cease from the prophet. Let's smite him with the tongue, lie about him, slander, ridicule, mock, and destroy him, and give no heed to his words.

They are not going to listen. In verse 19, Jeremiah begins to pray: "Give heed to me, O Lord, and hearken to the voice of them that contend with me. Lord, I want you to listen to me, but I also want you to listen to what they're saying. Shall evil be recompensed for good?" All Jeremiah had ever done for them was good, and they're recompensing evil.

He said, "For they have digged a pit for my soul. Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them. Lord, all I've tried to do was save them. Therefore deliver up their children to the famine and pour out their blood by the force of the sword and let their wives be bereaved of their children and be

widows and let their men be put to death. Let their young men be slain by the sword in battle."

"Let a cry be heard from their houses when thou shalt bring a troop suddenly upon them. For they have digged a pit to take me and hid snares from my feet. Yet, Lord, thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay me. Forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight, but let them be overthrown before thee. Deal with them in the time of thine anger." Isn't that amazing?

Jeremiah went from compassionate and concerned to exhausted and exasperated to now displeased and discerning. And he sees that the only answer is judgment. What Jeremiah is doing in this passage is just exactly that which Isaiah did. He's making intercession against his people. He is not praying for them. He is praying against them. What is he doing? This is not vengeance on Jeremiah's part. It may sound like that, but no, no, no. What Jeremiah is now doing is he is siding with the holy, righteous, just God who has declared that yes, he's going to destroy this people because of their hard heart, their hard head, their stiff neck, their refusing to listen, their rebellion, and their wickedness. And now what Jeremiah is doing is saying this, "Lord, yes, I agree with you. Bring upon them that which you have determined and that which you have declared."

When will we, as God's people, discern that the only way out of our ungodly, immoral, unjust, and wicked society is through God's righteous judgment? David was the man after God's own heart. I pray what he prayed in Psalm 7:9: "Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end."

"But establish thou the just." Have you ever prayed that God would bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end? I don't know about you. But you look at America. You look at the wicked who are in control. You look at the wicked contrivances that they've planned and schemed. You look at how vast everything is. The only thing you can say is, "Oh God, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end. You're the only one that can stop it. But establish thou the just. Establish thou the just."

I preached a message many years ago which I entitled, "A Door of Hope." And it was based on Hosea 2 and verse 15, where God said, "I

will give her vineyards from thence and the valley of Achor for a door of hope. And she shall sing there as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt." God said, "I've given her the valley of Achor for a door of hope." You know what the valley of Achor was? the valley of Achor was the valley of judgment.

It's where Achan and his entire family were put to death because of their sin and rebellion. And what did God say to Joshua and to the other people? "Neither will I be with you anymore until you deal with this." The door of hope was a door of judgment. The valley of Achor was a valley of judgment. Sin was dealt with and the wicked were destroyed. Judgment is not our enemy. Judgment is our friend.

Jeremiah, exhausted and exasperated, displeased yet discerning, begins to pray that the righteous God would bring His righteous judgment upon a disobedient people. What did he say? "Therefore deliver up their children to the famine and pour out their blood by the force of the sword and let their wives be bereaved of their children and be widows and let their men be put to death. Let their young men be slain by the sword in battle."

"Let a cry be heard from their houses when thou shalt bring a troop"—that is the Babylonian soldier—"suddenly upon them for they have digged a pit to take me and hid snares for my feet. Yea, Lord, thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay me. Forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight, but let them be overthrown before thee. Deal thus with them in the time of thine anger."

God's Own Declaration of Judgment

If you think Jeremiah was fed up to pray like that, wait until the sovereign God of heaven gets fed up. In Jeremiah 9:9 God asks, "Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord?"

"Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" Notice it's a nation. "For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing for the habitations of the wilderness, a lamentation because they are burned up, so that none can pass through them, neither can men hear the voice of the cattle, both the fowl of the heaven and the beast are fled, they are gone." Why?

Because of the soldiers, the Babylonian army. "And I will make Jerusalem heaps and a den of dragons, and I will make the cities of Judah desolate without an inhabitant. Who is the wise man that may understand this? And who is he to whom the mouth of the Lord hath spoken, that he may declare it? For what the land perisheth and is burned up like a wilderness, and none passeth through?"

"And the Lord saith, Because they have forsaken my law, which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein, but have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them. Therefore thus said the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will feed them, even this people with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink. I will scatter them also among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, and I will send a sword after them till I have consumed them. Thus said the Lord of hosts, Consider ye and call for the mourning women, that they may come and send for cunning women, that they may come and let them make haste and take up wailing for thee, that our eyes may run down with tears and our eyelids gush out with waters. For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion. How are we spoiled?"

"We're greatly confounded because we have forsaken the land, because our dwellings have cast us out. Yet hear the word of the Lord, O ye women, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth and teach your daughters wailing and every one of his neighbor lamentation for death. It's come up into our windows and has entered into our palaces to cut off the children from without. And the young men from the streets speak. Thus said the Lord, even the carcasses of men shall fall as dung upon the open field as the handful after the harvestman and none shall gather them."

Applications: The Necessity of Judgment and Recovery

Jeremiah was fed up, but so was God. Jeremiah could pray, but God could do much more. I hear Christians and non-Christians complaining about our nation's state and how bad it is. Hang on. It's going to get worse. We've sown the wind and are reaping the whirlwind. Anyone with discernment knows we cannot continue as a

nation on this road. God has sent roadblock after roadblock through temporal judgments. We remove them and continue down the same road in the same direction. Soon we'll be asking what we're doing in this handbasket and why we're going downhill so fast.

Because there'll be nothing but judgment. The second application is this: godly preachers and biblical preaching will never save those who refuse to hear and believe and repent. Compassion and concern on the part of godly pastors are insufficient to turn a bull-headed and stiff-necked people. Jeremiah never saved Judah. Isaiah never saved his people. Noah never saved anybody but his own house. If you study the scripture, you'll find out that sooner or later, God will do one of two things to a people who hate him and hate his word. He'll either move his preacher out of the land, just like he did Elijah, or he'll shut the mouth of his preacher, just like he did Jeremiah. And when God does that, just get ready for a full judgment. Like I said earlier, we ain't seen nothing yet. Here is the third application.

The sooner and the quicker the problem is dealt with, and excised, cut out, the sooner and quicker we can get on with recovery. I remember when the doctor told me about the nerve in my neck that was encapsulated by the bone. And he said, "It's not going to get any better. It's only going to get worse." And I asked him, "Can you do the surgery tomorrow?" He said, "No."

"But I can do it the next day." I was ready to get it over with. Why? So I could get on with my life and start the recovery. If these people are not going to repent of their sins, if we're not going to listen to God, if we're not going to turn back to His Word and His Law, let Him send His judgment. And He'll cut out the cancer. And then we can get on with our lives and with our society and building a godly nation once again in line with the Word of God. So the quicker it's dealt with, the quicker we'll have recovery.

I feel just like Jeremiah. I want it over with. I want it done. So God will not be blasphemed and dishonored and worshiped.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask you for your grace and your mercy and your goodness and your kindness. Lord, help us, teach us, build us up in the most holy faith. Help us to understand your word and to hear your word and repent and to follow your law

and to bring our lives in conformity to your word. Lord, others may not want to repent, but we should. Others may not love thee, but we should, and we want to. Others may not obey thee, but Father, we desire to. So give us grace that we may serve thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

Regards

Introduction: The Meaning of 'Regards'

Let's open our Bibles today to the book of Hebrews chapter 8, and we're just going to read verse 9. The title of the message is, "Regards." You will understand why momentarily. Hebrews 8 and verse 9: "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord."

Have you ever considered the word "regards"? We use that word very readily and frequently. I've said things like, "Please give my regards to your father," or "Send so-and-so my regards." Many times you even sign a letter with love and regards. So what do we mean when we talk about regards? What are we sending when we send our regards, and what are we giving when we give our regards? The word "regard" literally means to look upon or to think upon with a particular feeling—to regard a person with favor, or to have and show respect and honor for someone. We could say that the word "regard" means to pay attention to someone, looking upon them with love and favor.

Obviously there are some individuals for whom we have absolutely no regard. Such individuals are usually wicked, vile, deceitful, self-promoting, vain, worthless, and useless. All of those words describe politicians almost to a T, that is for sure. I recently read a piece that offered a test for certain individuals, and the test was like this. There's an incident happening: you are on a nature trail, walking by a river that has rapids and a huge, steep waterfall, and at the end of that waterfall are horrendous rocks. All of a sudden you look in the river and you see Nancy Pelosi and Charles Schumer being carried very quickly and swiftly in that water to the falls. You have just enough time to either throw them a rope and save their lives or take a picture of their last few moments on this earth. The test question was this: What speed do you set your camera to get the best picture?

Biblical Examples of Not Regarding Dishonorable People

We smile and laugh at that, but there is a biblical principle behind it. Turn to 2 Kings 3, and begin reading at verse 6. We will read about King Jehoram, the son of Ahab, the wickedest man in the northern kingdom of Israel. "And King Jehoram went out of Samaria at the same time, and numbered all Israel. And he went and sent to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, The king of Moab hath rebelled against me: wilt thou go with me against Moab to battle? And he said, I will go up: I am as thou art, my people as thy people, and my horses as thy horses. And he said, Which way shall we go up? And he answered, The way through the wilderness of Edom. So the king of Israel went, and the king of Judah, and the king of Edom: and they fetched a compass of seven days' journey: and there was no water for the host, or for the cattle that followed them. And the king of Israel said, Alas, that the Lord hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab! But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, that we may inquire of the Lord by him? And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah. And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the Lord is with him. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him. And Elisha said unto the king of Israel,

What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother—that is, the prophets of Baal. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay: for the Lord hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab. And Elisha said, As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee." Let me put this where you can grasp what Elisha was saying, in a Southern colloquialism: here's what he said.

"I wouldn't spit on you if you were on fire. I'd let you burn up." That's what he said. "Were it not that I regarded the person of Jehoshaphat, I would not look toward thee nor see thee." In other words, I would let you die, because he had absolutely no regard for him—the king was a very wicked, vile, corrupt king. And of course, probably, Elisha may have wished that he had been dead. So it is very impossible to honor a dishonorable person. Moreover, it is impossible on the one hand to show favor to someone who is unfavorable. In fact, we're commanded not to favor certain individuals, not to regard certain individuals, not to show them honor or respect. Let me give you an illustration. Leviticus chapter 19 and verse 31: "Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God." In other words, wizards and warlocks and mediums and fortune tellers and all these people—God says do not show them any regard whatsoever. The Hebrew word is "panah," which literally means that we are forbidden to show that respect to these individuals. Evidently the people in Samaria in the New Testament did not really comprehend this passage. In Acts chapter 8, beginning with verse 9, you will read about a man by the name of Simon who happened to be a sorcerer: "But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries." So God says that we are forbidden to show any regard, any favor toward any of these people like this. There's another individual in the Bible to whom no regard was to be given. His name was Nabal. And Nabal, you

remember, was a selfish, inconsiderate, and unappreciative being. Nabal was a very rich man.

He had plenty of sheep and whatever else. David and his men protected Nabal's servants, sheep, and goods, and the servants told Nabal that not one thing was missing as long as David and his men were there. When the time came to shear those sheep, a time of rejoicing and plenty, David sent some of his servants to ask for a blessing: "Lord, share some of the good stuff that you have with us, with our men." But Nabal railed upon them, saying, "There are many men that break away from their master these days. Who is the son of David? Or who is this David, the son of Jesse, that I should do anything for him?" The servants went back and told David, and David said, "Gird ye every man on his sword."

Abigail, the wife of Nabal, was not there when David's servants came. One of Nabal's servants told her, "You better get ready, because trouble is brewing; David's going to come and wipe us out." When she heard what had happened, she loaded some of the asses with all kinds of dates and foods and meat and went to meet him and fell down before him. In 1 Samuel 25:25 she said to David, "Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send." The word "Nabal" literally means "fool." She says he's a fool, folly is with him. But she says, "Regard not this son or this man of Belial." Abigail is not only admitting that he's a fool, she's also confessing that he is wicked, vile, a heathen, unsaved, and so she tells David, "Don't pay any attention to him. He is not worth fighting with. He is worthless." That is what she's saying about her own husband: "David, do not regard this man of Belial. Just don't pay him any attention. Let him go."

Now, it's one thing to disregard men at times, because men obviously are sometimes very unfavorable and dishonorable, that is for sure. But it's quite a different thing when men disregard and dishonor the one true and the living God.

The Danger of Disregarding God

We usually cannot comprehend the disdain and dishonor that many unconverted people show toward our Lord. Let me give a clear illustration. Many of you know that I send out sermon notes weekly to those who ask. This past week I sent them out as usual, and one man received them who had not asked to be on the email list. His email was exactly like the individual who asked, but with one letter difference—my mistake in typing. So he got the last message, "The Tactic of Flight." He emailed back asking to be removed from the mailing list, and then wrote this exact quote: "Your God was a deranged Jew who got his ass nailed by the Romans. The Romans should have nailed the rest of the terrorists. You would have saved us from the dark ages."

Can you imagine someone writing that about Jesus Christ? It shows how historically ignorant he is. First, Jesus Christ was not a Jew. He was a Judahite, born in Judah, and certainly he has been and is the king, but he himself was not a Jew. Remember how even his own disciples said, "Knowest thou not that the Jews seek to kill thee?" Our Lord was from the northern kingdom; he was an Israelite, that is for sure. He was born in Judea, but he was not a Jew because Judaism is a religion. That's why they crucified him—he would not go along with what they thought and believed.

Moreover, he says it would have saved us from the Dark Ages. Really? If I remember correctly, the Dark Ages lasted from 1100 to 1500. Do you know what got us out of the Dark Ages? The Reformation—when the emphasis came back on the Word of God and on Christianity. The reason the Dark Ages were dark was because there was no truth. And Jesus Christ is truth, and the Word of God is truth.

If that is not horrific enough, turn to John chapter 5. Not only does this man demonstrate his historical and biblical ignorance, he also demonstrates very clearly his rebellion toward the Lord Jesus Christ and toward God the Father. Look in John 5:22: "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." So the Father is not going to be doing the judging; the Lord Jesus Christ is going to be the judging. Why has God the Father committed all judgment to the Son? Verse 23: "That all men should

honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him." So the Bible makes this very clear: if you dishonor the Lord Jesus Christ, you dishonor God the Father. If you attack the Lord Jesus Christ, you then are attacking God the Father. And to show you the absolute insanity of this, anyone who dishonors and disrespects and disregards the Lord Jesus Christ is dishonoring, disrespecting, and disregarding the one who is going to be his judge and executioner. Why would you spit in the face of the judge who has the power to condemn you and to execute you?

David certainly gave some good counsel concerning this in Psalm 2:11–12. In fact, he was writing to kings and he said, “Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.” Now listen to what he said: “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.” If only a little wrath causes one to perish, what in the world is going to happen when there is much wrath? Obviously, you’re throwing hot water in the face of the judge. Turn in your Bibles to the book of Hebrews chapter 10, and note verses 28 and 29. There’s one word that you really need to pay attention to.

"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses." This is the Old Testament. If you committed a sin worthy of death, there was no mercy. Two or three witnesses testified against you, you were executed. That was it. Verse 29: "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" The Greek word for "sorer" is "cheiron," which literally means to be worse, to be much worse, and to get worse and worse. So it is worse and worse, heaped upon worse and worse. It's not going to abide well with those who despise and dishonor the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God incarnate. When one speaks of Jesus Christ as nothing, when one despises his work of redemption and sins against the Spirit of God in convicting the world of unrighteousness, he is in the deepest of trouble.

The Principle of Lex Talionis: Honor and Dishonor

There's no two ways about that. Before we get to Hebrews chapter 8, turn to 1 Samuel chapter 2. I'm going to show you a principle enunciated throughout the Scripture. Look in 1 Samuel chapter 2, verse 30. In this passage, God is rejecting Eli and his sons. Hophni and Phinehas were priests. They were whoremongers. They stole God's offerings. They made the people despise the worship of God. God is going to get rid of Eli and his family. Look what he tells Eli in verse 30: "Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." God is rebuking Eli because he did not restrain his sons from all the evil that they did as priests, and he's putting forth the fact that you're going to be kicked out of the priesthood, your family's going to be kicked out of the priesthood. In the context, the way to honor God is to worship him and to give him that which he demands in the way that he demands.

Look at verse 30 again in the latter part. He says, "But be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." The Hebrew word for "despise" literally means to hold in contempt, to disdain, to scorn, and to treat as vile and worthless. So God says, those that scorn me, those that mock me, those that treat me with contempt and treat me as a vile and worthless individual, they shall be lightly esteemed. What does it mean to be lightly esteemed? It means our Lord is going to hold those in contempt who despise him. They are going to be treated as a light thing, as a trifle, as something that is insignificant, as something that is despicable. They're going to be brought to dishonor and disregarded. In other words, they have no regard for God. God is not going to have any regard for them. This is known as the lex talionis. It is the law of retribution. It is when God makes the punishment fit the crime. And so since now they have indeed disregarded God, God said very clearly, then I am going to disregard you.

SCRIPTURE READING - Hebrews 8:1-9 (KJV)

Israel's Rebellion and God's Disregard in Hebrews 8

Now, I want you to look in Hebrews chapter 8 and verse 9, because we're going to see this principle in a very practical application. I want you to look at verse 9 again and then we're going to read verse 9 in the context. So look in verse 9, "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord." Now I want you to see in the focus of and in the context of Hebrews chapter 8, it is referring to our Lord Jesus Christ and the New Covenant. So, I want you to begin looking, if you would, beginning there with verse 1, and let's just read through at least verse 12. I want you to see Hebrews 8, verse 1. "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount. But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second."

SCRIPTURE READING - Hebrews 8:8-12 (KJV)

"For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because

> they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."
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> Now, the interesting thing is this. This passage deals with the New Covenant. The Old Covenant was written in stone. The New Covenant is written in the heart. In the New Covenant, we are enabled to come boldly into the holiest of all. In the New Covenant, we are to come boldly to the throne of grace, the Bible says, that we may find grace and help in the hour of need. But however, it's not the New Covenant that I want to deal with right now particularly. It is the attitude and the actions of Israel in the Old Covenant.

God did everything for Israel in the Old Covenant. Look in verse 9 again. He says, "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt." What did God do for Israel? He delivered them, guided them, preserved them, fed them, taught them, gave them his law. He took them by the hand. Every parent or grandparent has taken a child's hand and held it tightly crossing a busy street. What would you do if your grandchild tried to jerk his hand free and run into traffic? You would not like that. You would tighten down as best you could, and if the child did finally jerk loose and ran straight into traffic, it would be tragic.

Israel as an Unfaithful Wife

We know what would happen. What did Israel do when God took them by the hand and led them out of Egypt? They did just like a rebellious child. They kicked, screamed, pulled away, and ran in the opposite direction he wanted them to go. Hold Hebrews 8; we're coming back there. Turn to Isaiah chapter 5, and read the first 7 or 8

verses. God gives a very clear illustration of how Israel turned out absolutely rebellious. Watch verse 1: "Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill." Now we'll find out who that vineyard was. Look what he did for this vineyard. "And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein." "And he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard:

I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry. God said, I did everything I could for them, and yet they rebelled against me. They refused to obey. They refused to honor me.

Now, the interesting thing is this, God gives us numerous pictures of what Israel was like. So, if you would turn right over to the book of Jeremiah chapter 31 and look if you would please at verse 32. Jeremiah 31 and verse 32. In fact, let's read verse 31 as well. God says, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt;" That sounds familiar, I hope. It's Hebrews 8, 9. Now watch. "...which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord."

What husband has any regard for a rebellious, disobedient, and unfaithful wife? The answer is, there are none. If you would look and read the book of Hosea, the book of Hosea is replete with pictures of

the unfaithfulness of Israel. Whoredom in the Bible is not simply physical; it is more spiritual than anything else. Hence God has always referred to Israel as being an unfaithful wife. And in being an unfaithful wife, she despised him. Let's go back in our Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 3, and read verses 2 and 3. Jeremiah chapter 3, verse 2: "Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lien with. In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness."

Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed. So he's talking about his people, Israel. Now look in your Bibles to Ezekiel chapter 16, verse 28. In fact, it would do you well to read Ezekiel chapter 16. But look at verse 28. God says, "Thou hast played the whore also with the Assyrians, because thou wast insatiable; yea, thou hast played the harlot with them, and yet couldest not be satisfied." So no amount of idolatry satisfied them. It was more and more and more. Skip down to verse 32: "But as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband!" And then look in verse 45. He says to them—we're talking about Judah and Jerusalem and Israel—"Thou art thy mother's daughter, that lotheth her husband and her children; and thou art the sister of thy sisters, which lothed their husbands and their children: your mother was an Hittite, and your father an Amorite." And he's talking about Samaria, Jerusalem, and Sodom. Notice he's accusing them of adultery, fornication, spiritual fornication. I hope you're beginning to see why God had absolutely no regard for these people. Look back to Hebrews chapter 8, verse 9 again. I want you to see this, to emphasize it and drive it home. He says, "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant." And what's the response? "And I regarded them not, saith the Lord." They did not continue, and he regarded them not. I could take a lot of time today and take you through the Bible and show you the multitudinous sins, rebellions, and provocations that Israel committed against the Lord. But instead of me taking all the time to do that, why don't I just show you the consequences and the outcome of their rebellion.

Consequences of Rebellion: Only Two Entered the Promised Land

Look in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 10, and begin reading with verse 1. Remember, our Lord is talking about taking these people by the hand and leading them out of the land of Egypt. "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness." That is, He had no regard for them, they disregarded Him. I always have to smile at this verse. So here's my question: out of the multitude that God took by the hand and brought out of the land of Egypt, how many of them actually got into the promised land? Two. Joshua and Caleb. All of them except Joshua and Caleb. Have you noticed? He keeps saying, "You continue not in my covenant." You broke my covenant. You rebelled. You disregarded. You disrespected. You dishonored. You had no regard for me or for my word. Now God says, "I regarded you not." That is again the lex talionis, the law of retribution. Now I want to show you some verses. Turn to Isaiah chapter 5, verses 11 through 13. Look at the curse that God places, the woe that He issues. "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them!" Where it's all they do, they're drunkards, they lay around and drink. "And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts." Here you go.

Prophetic Declarations of God's Disregard

"But they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands." Now watch verse 13: "Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst." Because they regard not the work of the Lord, nor consider the operation of his hands.

Look in your Bibles to the book of Lamentations, chapter 4. The book of Lamentations has five chapters—five poems on the fall of Jerusalem, each from a different perspective on that fall. Beginning at verse 13: "For the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests, that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her, they have wandered as blind men in the streets, they have polluted themselves with blood, so that men could not touch their garments. They cried unto them, Depart ye; it is unclean; depart, depart, touch not: when they fled away and wandered, they said among the heathen, They shall no more sojourn there. The anger of the Lord hath divided them; he will no more regard them: they respected not the persons of the priests, they favoured not the elders." God says, I'll just no longer regard you. You have no regard for me. You're corrupt. You're wicked.

Look in the book of Amos, chapter 5, beginning at verse 21. I'm just trying to show you this principle: "Them that honour me I will honour, saith the Lord. Those that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." So Amos chapter 5 verse 21, look what God says to Israel: "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts." God said, I'm not going to regard anything that you give me. In fact, verse 23: "Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols." Why? He says, "But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."

In other words, they were unrighteous and ungodly, trying to be merely ritualistic and ceremonial, offering God sacrifices. God says, I'm not going to regard that or look upon it with favor, not by any stretch of the imagination. If you would turn to the book of Zechariah, right before Malachi, chapter 11, and begin reading in verse 6. "For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them. And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock. Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my

soul lothed them, and their soul also abhorred me." God said, they hated me, so I loathed them. "Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another." God said, I'm not going to have any regard for you. You despised me. You loathe me. I loathe you.

Now look in the book of Malachi, chapter 1, beginning with verse 6. "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts." Watch verse 9. "And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the Lord of hosts." So He says, here you go, you've got a governor, a mayor, some important individual, a president.

Blessings Turned to Wrath for the Impenitent

Invite him to your house. Serve him a big old steak with canker sores all over it. That's rotten. That's worthless. Will he accept you? Will he regard your persons? God says, you think that you can disregard me and disrespect and dishonor me and me have favor towards you and me regard you? No, no, no. He said it doesn't work like that. God has no regard for those who do not regard Him. Now listen carefully. He will feed them. He will keep them alive. He will bless them with common blessings. He will allow them to continue in their hatred and rebellion of Him while He still blesses them. But every one of His blessings turns into wrath. Let me show you. Turn in your Bibles to the book of Romans chapter 2. Romans chapter 2 beginning there with verse 4. Romans 2, verse 4. Watch carefully. Romans 2, verse 4. "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Now let's stop there. "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness?" You stop and think how God feeds the wicked. He

gives them breath. He gives them water. He gives them food. He gives them family. He gives them friends. He gives them everything. Not only are they despising the riches of His goodness, but also His forbearance and longsuffering. That is, God does not instantly slap them down. He does not instantly execute them. He does not kill them on the spot. He suffers long with them in their wickedness and their rebellion and their hatred of Him. And what they do not understand is the goodness of God to them is designed to lead them to repentance. But they despise that goodness. They despise that long-suffering and forbearance. But what does it do? All these blessings that God gives them, how does it turn out? Well, look in verse 5. "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds." So all of those blessings that God has given you, that you have despised, turns into a treasury of wrath against you. Wow. God said He regarded not those persons that He took by the hand and led them out of Egypt. Why did He disregard them? Because they disregarded Him.

Applications: Honor God to Be Regarded by Him

Now, let me make a couple of applications. The first one is this. If you do not regard God, do not expect Him to regard you. Yes, you may have his blessings temporarily, but here's the thing, in your deepest trial, in your deepest hour of need, and the strongest pain and misery that comes upon you, when you really and truly need him and want him, you won't have him.

How can I say that? Turn to Proverbs chapter 1, beginning at verse 24. Follow this logic—the lex talionis, the law of retribution, the punishment made to fit the crime. God says, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof." You would not listen. Now what happens? Verse 26: "I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge,

and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." You reap what you sow. God always makes the punishment fit the crime. You disregarded Him, now He disregards you. Turn to Deuteronomy 32, beginning at verse 34, then skip to verse 39. Watch what the Bible says. Deuteronomy 32, verse 34, God asks this question.

"Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures?" What is sealed up among his treasures? Verse 35: "To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste." Verse 39: "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy. Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people."

Those that disregard God when their foot starts sliding and they truly want help may be righteously disregarded. "Them that honour me I will honour, saith the Lord." If we want God to hear and help us, we must honor Him, obey Him, and bring our lives into conformity to His Word. Psalm 102:17 is precious: "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer." When we come helpless and hopeless, trusting only in Him, seeking to honor Him and bring glory to His name, God says, "I will hear you. I will regard you. I'll give special favor to you because you regard me and honor me." It's not works; it's a biblical principle.

How much favor would you look upon someone if every time you saw him, he cursed you, hated you, despised you, and tried to destroy everything you did? You may be civil, but you would not look upon him with great favor. God says, "Them that honour me I will

honour, saith the Lord, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." They will be counted as a trifle, insignificant, and cursed.

Because, what did he say? "I took them by the hand, and they violated, they broke, they rejected, they despised my covenant. And I regarded them not." Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee this day. We thank you for your word and truth. Help us, Lord, to see how sinful, wicked, and rebellious it is to not regard Thee, honor Thee, and glorify Thee. Thou art God alone; beside Thee there is none other. Jesus Christ is God incarnate, God revealed in the flesh, and we confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Help us, Father, to honor and regard Him, and in so doing honor and regard Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray, Amen.

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Chapter 2: I Feel Just Like Jeremiah
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Chapter 3: Regards
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