

Jeremiah chapter 20 and then part of 21.

*Now Pashhur, the priest, the son of Immer who was chief officer in the house of the Lord, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things. Then Pashur beat Jeremiah the prophet and put him in the stocks that were in the upper Benjamin gate of the house of the Lord. On the morrow, when Pashur released Jeremiah from the stocks, Jeremiah said to him, "The Lord does not call your name 'Pashur', but* ***'TERROR ON EVERY SIDE'****; for, thus says the Lord, "Behold, I will make you a* ***TERROR*** *to yourself and to all your friends. They shall fall by the sword of their enemies while you look on, and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon. He shall carry them captive to Babylon and shall slay them with the sword. Moreover, I will give all the wealth of the city---all its gains, all its prized belongings and all the treasures of the kings of Judah---to the hand of their enemies, who shall plunder them and seize them and carry them to Babylon. And you, Pashur, and all who dwell in your house shall go into captivity to Babylon. You shall go, and there you shall die and there you shall be buried, you and all your friends to whom you have prophesied falsely."*

*Oh Lord, thou hast deceived me and I was deceived. Thou art stronger than I am; thou has prevailed. I've become a laughingstock all the day. Everyone mocks me; for whenever I speak, I cry out, I shout,* ***"VIOLENCE AND DESTRUCTION,"*** *for the word of the Lord has become for me a reproach and derision all day long. If I say, "I will not mention him or speak anymore in his name," there is in my heart, as it were,* ***A BURNING FIRE SHUT UP IN MY BONES****; and I am* ***WEARY*** *with holding it in...and I cannot. For I hear many whispering, "Terror is on every side. Denounce him, let us denounce him," say all my familiar friends watching for my fall. "Perhaps he will be deceived, and we can overcome him and take our revenge on him."*

*But the Lord is with me as a* ***DREAD WARRIOR****. Therefore, my persecutors will stumble. They will not overcome me. They will be greatly shamed, for they will not succeed. Their eternal dishonor will never be forgotten. Oh Lord of hosts, who triest the righteous; who seest the heart and the mind. Let me see thy vengeance upon them, for to thee have I committed my cause. Sing to the Lord! Praise the Lord! For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hand of evil doers.*

*Cursed be the* ***DAY*** *on which I was born, the day when my mother bore me. Let it not be blessed. Cursed be the* ***MAN*** *who brought the news to my father. "A son is born to you," making him very glad. Let that man be like the cities which the Lord overthrew without pity. Let him hear a cry in the morning and an alarm at noon, because he did not kill me in the womb. So, my mother would've been my grave and her womb forever great. Why did I come forth from the womb to see* ***TOIL*** *and* ***SORROW*** *and spend my days in shame?*

*This is the word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord when King* ***ZEDEKIAH*** *sent to him, Pashur, the son of Melchiah and Zephaniah, the priest, the son of Maaseiah saying, "Inquire of the Lord for us, for Nebuchudrezzer king of Babylon is making war against us. Perhaps the Lord will deal with us according to all his wonderful deeds, and will make him withdraw from us."*

*Then Jeremiah said to them, "Thus you shall say to Zedekiah, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, "Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war which are in your hands and with which you are fighting against the king of Babylon and against the Chaldeans who are besieging you outside the walls. And I will bring them together into the midst of this city. I myself will fight* ***AGAINST*** *you with outstretched hand and strong arm, in anger and in fury and in great wrath. And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast. They shall die of a great pestilence. Afterwards," says the Lord, "I will give Zedekiah king of Judah and his servants and the people in this city, who survive the pestilence, sword and famine into the hand of Nebuchudrezzer king of Babylon into the hand of their enemies---into the hand of those who seek their lives. He shall smite them with the edge of the sword. He shall not pity them or spare them or have compassion." '*

*"And to this people you shall say, 'Thus says the Lord, "Behold, I set before you, the way of* ***LIFE*** *and the way of* ***DEATH****. He who* ***STAYS*** *in this city shall* ***DIE*** *by the* ***SWORD****, by* ***FAMINE****, and by* ***PESTILENCE****. But he who* ***GOES OUT*** *and surrenders to the Chaldeans who are besieging you, shall* ***LIVE*** *and shall have his life as a prize of war. For I have set my face against this city for* ***EVIL*** *and not for good," says the Lord. "It shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn with fire." ' "*

Well now, this passage which we've just read is part of a ***SERIES*** which must have come from Jeremiah's private diary, in which he was honest enough to record his depressions. And before we sing another hymn, and then study the passage, I want to read part... another part of this poem which I've been reading to you from time to time. And there is one section of this poem, a book by Norman Habel called *'Are You Joking, Jeremiah'* ...and there's part of this poem which puts together the ***DEPRESSION*** that came over Jeremiah, and the ***HEART CRY*** which came because he was so lonely and so attacked and so ridiculed. So, let me read this poem. It'll give you the feel of what we've just been reading in the Bible:

*I wrote a private diary with all the gripes and all the guff which I could fling to make it rough on God for all he did to me, or rather all he* ***DIDN'T*** *do. My sweaty prayers may turn you off... or turn you on. Who knows? I wrote them on the cutting edge of suicide, the outer point of sanity beside the grave. If you want to play the part of God along the way, your snapping souls may find a kindred spirit in his sharp replies---that's if you like to throw mad pies. Here my sweaty prayers begin. Listen here, God. Listen here, God. There's a limit to the slime that a normal man can take, when it's rubbed into his face. I've had nothing else but snarls since you hypnotized my lips with your itchy words...your biting words...your crackling words that make me clinch my mouth, tighten up my chest and sob. I'm an addict to your word that dribbles through my teeth. I cannot take it back.*

*Oh God, why won't you let me lose this hideous preaching habit, this yoke across my jaw. Their sniveling God; what about their drivel, God---the whispering, the snickering, the gargling, the bickering---that pound against my brain. I prayed for all these people---on my knees, on my face, on their pavements, and their coffins. If you please, they heard my cry and so did God; but they kicked me in the back to watch me wince. Do you enjoy their sport, Lord God, their pious game, their dirty thrills at my expense? Oh God, why can't you understand? Why must you be so dense? I'm innocent, I'm clean---I haven't cursed, I haven't lied, I haven't damned or (even worse) blasphemed. Test me, God, and see. then why am I in pain? Just tell me that. What is freedom, God, when your words in my mouth are like* ***SCREAMS*** *in my soul---burning my bowels, grinding my bones, inflaming my liver, and forcing a taste of bile into my lips? I hate this taste of bile.*

*I hate this word of death. I hate your song of anger. And I hate the way you mock me, God, underneath your breath. For every time I try to shut my mouth or hold my tongue or clench my fist or bite my lip or close my eyes to what is going on, a sudden urge comes over me. A violent spasm smashes me, and I am forced to shout---to violently insist---that God is God. I am forced to say God's ANGER is an evil active storm, hovering above, sputtering on the fringe, waiting for the word from God to buckle, break and burst upon our heads. My lip is bleeding, Lord. Please get it over with. Please turn your storm toward my foes, and bring your vengeance down before I lose my mind. Why was I born at all? Why was I born at all, if all my life is woe? If all I find is misery, if all I ask is brushed aside by a brisk and brutal God, why was I born at all? If everything I've learned is challenged by experience, and nothing stands the test when life gets under way, why was I born at all? If death is all I need to find relief from blood and hate, from raw discipleship, from suffering without hope, why was I born at all? If God will never prove that he is really God, and not a bleary idol who cannot see the sky, why was I born at all? If I can't be myself, and force my deepest doubts before the face of God, why God? Why? Why won't you answer me? God...one word? Any word? God! God! God!*

***Jeremiah Hits Rock Bottom***

Does that convey to you the feelings of Jeremiah? We are going to study a passage in which Jeremiah touched ***ROCK BOTTOM.*** And we're going to see how God dealt with him when he did...and how God lifted him from his depression. I hope you won't find it depressing. I hope you'll find it helpful and hopeful that other people have got as low as this, that some of God's greatest servants have got as low as this, and that God caught them at the bottom and held them.

Well, if I were asked to give a title to these two chapters, I would simply say, "***JEREMIAH HITS ROCK BOTTOM."*** I'm so glad the Bible is an honest book and shows both the ***ELATION*** and the ***DEPRESSION*** of some of the greatest men of God. It doesn't hesitate to let us know that Elijah wanted to commit suicide, that King David felt the same way, that Jeremiah got to this point, and even Holy of Holies, that the Lord Jesus himself, Son of God, came to the point where he cried out against heaven, "*My God, my God. Why?"*

It's comforting to us to know that the greatest servants of God have felt like this from time to time. And Jeremiah must have been willing for us to know that. The trouble with many of us today is that we will not let other people know when we're going through it. We bury it. We become introvert. We let it go in. And we are the ***LAST*** people to cope with it. We need to share. We need to get it out. And Jeremiah let it out...or we wouldn't be studying it this morning. He wrote it down, and a man called Baruch later put it together with the rest of his prophecies.

But I want you also to realize that God ***WANTED*** us to know; and God didn't mind us knowing that people like Jeremiah said the most ***AWFUL*** things to him. What a wonderful God we have, who is willing to let us know that he has been so criticized and so complained against---unjustly! Here is Jeremiah, and he is going to say, *"God,* ***YOU*** *have deceived me.* ***YOU*** *have fooled me.* ***YOU*** *have been having me on. It's not me who's joking, it's* ***YOU*** *Jehovah. Are* ***YOU*** *joking, Jehovah?* ***YOU*** *have been fooling me.* ***YOU*** *have led me into this trap.* ***YOU*** *never warned me.* ***YOU*** *have just led me on.* ***YOU*** *have used me!"* And God wanted us to know that that had been said. And God doesn't defend himself against the charge. Isn't God patient with us? God would much rather you accused him unjustly to his face than that you didn't talk to him. He would much rather you'd throw it in his face and say, *"God, why? Why was I born at all?"* than to have you run away into a little corner, and say it to yourself---until you have got yourself in a real state? Much better to get it ***OUT***. And God can take it, otherwise he wouldn't have put it in his book.

Well now, before we look at the actual depression, and try and analyze how Jeremiah got into this state and why he said what he did and try and understand his heart... It's sandwiched between two narratives. It's in ***POETRY***, and it's between two sections of ***PROSE***. And as I've told you earlier, the poetry in Jeremiah comes from the ***HEART***. The prose is from the ***HEAD***. And I think we need to look at the sandwich and take the whole sandwich and chew it up and digest it. And then we get the feel. Let's look at what ***LED UP*** to his depression. Let's look at what ***FOLLOWED*** it, and then we'll see it in ***PERSPECTIVE***. The trouble with depression is when you're ***IN IT***, you can only see the depression. You can't think about what went on ***BEFORE***, and you can't think about what might happen ***AFTERWARDS***. You're locked into the present moment, into the existential experience of depression. But we can see the whole thing.

***What Preceded Jeremiah's Depression: A Flogging***

So, let's look ***FIRST*** at chapter 20. What immediately ***PRECEDED*** the depression? In fact, we've almost got to go back to last Sunday morning. I mustn't repeat last Sunday morning's. But let me just remind you that the last thing we saw Jeremiah do was to take a ***CLAY JAR***, and ***SMASH*** ***IT*** in pieces outside the potsherd gate. And then from there he walked into the Temple, which was a short distance away; and in front of the large worshiping crowd, he shouted, *"God says, 'I will break* ***YOU****, as my servant broke that jar, because you've stiffened your necks against my word.' "* ---Not the kind of preaching calculated to comfort a congregation! Not the kind of thing that would just enable them to go on worshiping and singing their psalms---as they had been doing---with everything in dignified peace! Jeremiah appeared in the Temple as a disturber of the peace. And what happened next came directly from that. Because the Temple had two main officials, the ***HIGH PRIEST*** in charge of the service and the chief bouncer. He was not called that in Hebrew. He was called a ***'CHIEF OFFICER'***; but in fact, that is what the name meant. And he was second in power to the high priest. And his job was to get rid of disturbing people.

And so, the high priest went on with the worship, and the chief officer threw people out who were destroying the peace of the service. And he had a job to do; but he did it wrongly here. His name was ***PASHHUR***…Pashhur. And little did he dream, that his action that morning would make him infamous. He certainly never dreamt that a few hundred people in Guildford would be thinking all about him---2,400 years later! He never dreamt of that, but we are. It shows that a little action can be terribly important from the point of view of eternity. But he saw Jeremiah purely as a disturber of the peace---not as a preacher, not as a prophet, but as someone likely to cause upset, as someone likely to lower morale. And so, he decided on a short-shot lesson; and without trial, he ***FLOGGED*** Jeremiah---the first time anybody had laid a finger on Jeremiah. He had had many things said to him before. This was the ***FIRST*** time he'd actually suffered physical violence.

He was ***FLOGGED***---and that really would mean flogging till his back was probably torn in ribbons and bleeding. And then he was taken out of the north side of the city, and he was put in the ***STOCKS***. Now stocks to us are just two beams with hollows in for the feet and a form to sit on. That was not what stocks meant then. It was a scaffolding so shaped, that when the human being was put in it he was ***DISTORTED*** in a crooked way, until his muscles were so cramped that he was totally in agony. It was, of course, also a humiliating punishment, because people would come up and laugh at this person, so crooked and so cramped. And they would probably throw things at him. For 24 hours, Jeremiah suffered that. That is what brought on the depression, as we shall see in a moment.

***Depression Because of Persecution***

Jeremiah was the sort of ***SENSITIVE***, poetic person who could not take ridicule; he was extremely sensitive inside. Oh, he was bold when he preached, but inside he had a very soft heart. He was what the Israelis today would call a *'sabra'*, which is the fruit of the cactus---very prickly and tough on the ***OUTSIDE***, but very sweet and soft on the ***INSIDE***. And he was a *'sabra'*. And when he was put in that silly position---flogged, humiliated, laughed at, things thrown at him---Jeremiah couldn't cope with that. And he was ***DEPRESSED***.

I want you to notice that his depression came out of ***PERSECUTION*** for his faith. That's rather important. We must just be a little careful before we apply scriptures to our own depression---if we got our depression through self-pity, or through some other thing---other than persecution. This passage is primarily to comfort those who are having a tough time because they belong to the Lord. And I know that some of you listening to me now are having a tough time because you are ***CHRISTIANS***. And there are sometimes when you can't take it. And there are times when you just get depressed and say, "It's not worth it. What's the use? The Lord has trapped me into this situation." You are going to get a great deal of ***COMFORT*** from this.

***Pashhur: 'Maggor-Missabib' (Terror on Every Side)***

So Pashhur flogged him, put him in the stocks, released him the next morning thinking that Jeremiah would be thoroughly subdued, humbled, and wouldn't give any bother again. As soon as he got him out of the stocks Jeremiah really gave him an earful. Jeremiah, with great boldness---having been flogged, having been in the stocks, having been humiliated---far from cringing before this man, gave two names to this man, which were very frightening. ***FIRST***, he gave the man a nickname, which he would never live down. He called him...let's get it right. And I hope I'm getting the pronunciation right. And there are those of you who will correct me afterwards if I've got it wrong. But he called him ***'MAGOR-MISSABIB'***. That's a good nickname, isn't it? *"Here comes old Magor-Missabib."* And you know, that stuck to Pashhur for the rest of his life. It's been a name that's been used down in history---especially in an age that knew its Bible better---for certain kinds of people. "He's a *Magor-Missabib*." A Scottish minister was visiting a Scottish peasant woman one day, and she was talking about the cruelty of the *'factor of the landlord',* a man who came to collect the rent. And she said to the minister, "He's a proper *Magor-Missabib*." And I don't know what you make of this, but the minister had to go and get his concordance and look it up before he knew what she was meaning. In fact, it means ***'terror all around'***...terror all around.

And Jeremiah said, *"I give you this nickname, in the in the name of the Lord, for two reasons.* ***FIRST****, your treatment of me shows that you are going to be a 'terror' to many other people. This is the kind of unjust treatment, without trial, that belongs to a* ***TYRANNY****. And, I name you Magor-Missabib, 'terror all round'. And wherever you go, people will call you that."* And they did. And he said, *"The* ***SECOND*** *reason why I give you that nickname is this: that terror will one day* ***REBOUND ON YOU****. And you, who have made others frightened, will one day see your own family taken away as slaves to a foreign land. And you'll go too. And you will be in terror. And you will die there in a foreign land, and you will be buried there."* ***Magor-Missabib***…that was pretty bold of Jeremiah to give such a nickname.

***Babylon is Coming: 'Maggor-Missabib'***

And the ***OTHER NAME*** he gave was this... And it's the first time he had ever used the word. For many years now, Jeremiah had said*, "There's going to come, from the north, an enemy to wipe out this little land,"* but he had never named that enemy. He had never given any indication as to who it might be. He had just talked in vague threatening terms. Now to Pashhur, for the first time, he uses a name, and he names the enemy who is going to come: ***BABYLON***. Babylon. Babylon. *"****Maggor-Missabib****: Babylon is going to produce terror in your heart."* And for the first time, Jeremiah ***NAMES*** the threat.

I wonder if you realize what that means. I could give you a little bit of a ***HISTORY*** lesson now, and a ***GEOGRAPHY*** lesson. That wouldn't really give you the main feel of the word *'Babylon*,' but let me just try. There is the ***'FERTILE CRESCENT'***, as it's called in the Middle East. It's a great curve of green surrounded by mountains and desert. The green is composed of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers curving up this side, and then down through the holy land to the Nile Delta, and the Nile River. And if you traced it on a map, it's a beautiful curve. They call it the ‘*Fertile Crescent’.* And Israel is about two-thirds the way around just here---between the Nile, and the Tigris and Euphrates. And it's green, not because it has a big river, but because the rain from the Mediterranean comes along the Mediterranean and drops on the Judean hills. So, they're right in the ***MIDDLE*** of that crescent. And anybody, who moves around it, has to go through this little chosen land. And if you live in the middle of a crossroads, you will always get ***RUN OVER***. And that's what was happening to Israel all the time. And therefore, there were only two directions from which enemies could come: from the Nile (South), or from the Tigris and Euphrates (North). And away over on this side---at the other end---there was a nomadic people called the Chaldeans, in what is now called Iraq. And in the middle of their land---in the Chaldees land---there was a town called *'Ur of the Chaldees'*. And in that town lived an old man of 80. And to that old man, ***ABRAHAM***---or Abram, as he was called then---God said*, "Get out of there and travel around to a land that I'll show you."* And that's where Abraham came from, from the Chaldees. That's when the ***PEOPLE OF GOD*** began. That's when the story of our ***SALVATION*** began. We would not be here this morning if God had not called that one old man, Abraham, from the Chaldees.

Centuries later, in the time of Jeremiah, the Chaldees became strong, and they grew. And they wanted a capital city. So, they rebuilt ***BABEL***. And if you know your Bible, you know that Abraham was called in Genesis 12. But in Genesis 11, it describes a tower reaching to heaven in that land of the Chaldees, called Babel. And the Chaldees rebuilt ***BABYLON***. Babel...Babel, the place where God confused speech! And they rebuilt it. And it became a powerful metropolis of a growing empire, that spread out and out along the fertile crescent. And by the time of Jeremiah, ***BABYLON*** was pressing down on Judah. Now that's the situation. Do you realize now the ***THREAT*** of the name *'Babylon'*?

God is saying, *"I'll take you back to where you were before I called Abraham. I'll take you right back to Genesis 11. I'll treat you as if I had never called Abraham. I'm going to put you back in Babel."* Do you realize the ***THREAT*** now and the ***SIGNIFICANCE*** of that name? It wasn't just a foreign name that he was sending them back to. He was saying, *"I wipe my hands of your history."* God is saying, *"I'm going to turn the clock right back to before I called Abraham. It's just been no use. It's come to nothing. I'll put you right back to Babylon."* To Babylon---As if Abraham had never lived! Do you get the feel of it now? What would you feel if God said to you, *"I'm going to put you right back where you were before I touched your life. I'm going to put you right back where you were before you'd heard the gospel of Jesus?"* How would you feel? Now that's the meaning of the word Babylon. It's a ***DREADFUL*** word. And Jeremiah, let out of the stocks, says, *"I call you 'TERROR', and you'll go back to* ***BABEL****."* It's quite a bold thing to say.

***Jeremiah's Private Agony***

Well, so much for Jeremiah's boldness in public. But as I've told you before, people who are bold in ***PUBLIC*** are not necessarily so in ***PRIVATE***. And those who say great things like this before ***MEN***, may speak very differently before ***GOD***. When Jeremiah got away from that situation---got alone with God---a great black heavy cloud of ***DEPRESSION*** settled over him as he thought of the humiliation, as he felt again the taunts of the crowd, their laughter, their mockery. And he was a very ***SENSITIVE*** person, very sensitive. And as the depression got hold of him, and he went down, and down, and down---wondering what ***PUNISHMENT*** would come for having said those last things to Pashhur, whether he (Pashhur) was even now reporting them to the high priest and to the king. And just what was awaiting him after being so bold? As he got ***LOW***, then he poured out the things that we've seen here.

As he limped away, his boldness deserted him. He had a strong reaction to the last 24 hours. Psychologists have examined this. They've tried to say what they feel is the pattern and the cause of his depression. I don't think there's much help in analyzing him psychologically. He's a human being. I'm just so glad that the prophets were not vegetables or machines, but people of like passions to ourselves...that they could have this kind of reaction. And if you are involved in Christian service, if you are serving the Lord, and you run into opposition, and you have a reaction like this, then you'll make straight for Jeremiah, and you'll draw ***COMFORT*** from the fact that he had this reaction and he came through it; but he had it. And while he was in it, he was very low indeed.

***Jeremiah's Complaint to God***

We look ***FIRST*** then at the ***COMPLAINT*** he makes about God. And it's the cry of a very insecure person expressed in very powerful poetry, but ***HUMILIATION***. It hurt him very deeply. He accuses God of deceiving him. *"Lord, you've deceived me. You are bigger than I am, and you've won. You've trapped me. You've made me a joke. You've made me the laughingstock."* That's an intriguing phrase, isn't it? Laughingstock. It comes from the ***STOCKS***. You've made me a laughingstock of all the people. You've trapped me.

Now, was this true? Jeremiah is saying, *"Lord, you never told me that I would be in this kind of a trouble. Lord, I thought you were gonna look after me. I thought you would protect me. I thought you'd deliver me. Lord, you've* ***DECEIVED*** *me. You promised your protection, and now it hasn't happened. And I've been* ***FLOGGED.*** *Look at my back, Lord. And they* ***LAUGHED*** *at me, Lord. I thought you were going to look after me. You've trapped me. You've deceived me."* And he went on to say, *"And Lord, you know the trouble is that you never give me anything* ***NICE*** *to say."*

It's all ***DOOM*** and ***GLOOM***. *"Every time I open my mouth, you put in it a message of* ***DEATH*** *and* ***BLACKNESS*** *and dreadful* ***BAD NEWS****. And the people want comforting, and they want uplifting; and you're not giving them any ray of hope. You're not. You're not giving me anything* ***NICE*** *to say to them. And Lord, you are even preventing me from refusing to speak."* He said, *"If I decide not to preach anymore, if I say, 'Right, that's it. I'm just not gonna preach anymore. It's just not worth it.' "* He said, *"There is in my bones a* ***FIRE*** *burning. Words flare up, and I can't keep them in; and* ***OUT*** *it comes again. I can't even decide whether to preach or not. You just* ***FORCE*** *me into it; and you give me these dreadful messages to preach. I just can't get out of it. You've* ***DECEIVED*** *me. You've* ***TRAPPED*** *me. And I hear their whispers. They're wanting to catch me out. They're wanting to denounce me. They're wanting to get rid of me. They're wanting to do anything to* ***STOP*** *this being preached. I've heard it, Lord. Why? Why did you* ***DECEIVE*** *me?"*

***Were Jeremiah's Complaints Against God Fair?***

 Now you know, it's a little ***UNFAIR***, is this; but when we're depressed we get very unfair. We say things that are ***EXAGGERATED***, and that are not strictly true. We accuse other people, and above all we accuse GOD of things of which he's not guilty. What was the truth of all this?

Well, let's just look at some of the points. ***FIRST***, he says, *"Whenever I open my mouth, it's all doom and gloom."* But you know, we've studied Jeremiah. Time and time again there was a ray of ***HOPE***. Time and time again there was an offer of ***HELP***. Time and time again, God said, *"But I'll bring you back one day home."* It wasn't ***ALL*** doom and gloom, but I'll agree it was 90% doom and gloom. But it wasn't all doom and gloom. But then, when Jeremiah says, *"Now God, you promised to protect me and deliver me."* What had God ***ACTUALLY*** promised? Very important this; he had promised this---and you can read about it in Chapter 1 or you can read about it in Chapter 19 also, because God repeated the call--- and the ***CALL*** is this. *"Jeremiah, they will attack you, and they will fight against you, but they will* ***NOT*** *win."*

***God Will Deliver Him***

In other words, God hadn't said, *"I'll keep you free from all* ***TROUBLE****. I'll keep you out of* ***PERSECUTION****."* God had made it quite, clear: *"Jeremiah, they will attack you, but they won't win."* In other words, *"There's gonna be suffering, but they will not have the last word. I will* ***DELIVER*** *you."* Now you cannot be delivered out of something unless you've been in it. That sounds so obvious when I say it, that you wonder why Jeremiah hadn't spotted it. But still today people think like this. Still today, scores of Christians think that God's promises are that he will keep us from having ***ANY*** trouble. His promise is that he will deliver us ***OUT OF*** troubles, which means that you've got to be ***IN*** them before he can deliver you ***OUT*** of them. "*What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Famine, nakedness, peril, sword? No.* ***IN*** *all these things, we are more than conquerors,"*--***IN*** them! *"Who are these who are arrayed in white?"* says John in Revelation 17. *"These are they who came* ***OUT*** *of the great tribulation."* They were ***IN*** it.

Too many Christians today believe that the church will be caught ***OUT*** before the tribulation comes on the world. Don't you believe it! ***PREPARE FOR TRIBULATION***. Jesus said, *"In the world you'll have tribulation."* You don't get out of these things because you've become a Christian. *"But I will* ***DELIVER*** *you. The tribulation won't have the last words,"* says God. *"You may go through it, but this thing won't win. You will be more than conquerors; and neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come nor height nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus."*

Oh, this is so ***IMPORTANT***. So many Christians want wrapping up in cotton wool and the kind of protection that will not give them any trouble at all. And Jeremiah had ***MISINTERPRETED*** God's promises. God said, "*They'll fight you; they'll attack you; but I will* ***DELIVER*** *you. They won't have the last word. You will be more than a conqueror."* And so, he was out of the stocks. ***WORSE*** was to follow. He would be imprisoned; he would be on trial for treason. He would be thrown into a pit. But every time, God would ***DELIVER*** him---and he did.

And the ***WORST*** thing that people can do to you is kill you. And if anybody kills you, then God will ***DELIVER*** you. Fear, not those who can kill the body. So, Jesus himself went to the cross believing that God could deliver, and God ***DID***. And the third day he rose from the dead. God has not promised to keep us ***OUT*** of trouble. He's promised to ***DELIVER*** us from it. And that's the promise he made. And he didn't deceive Jeremiah at all. He told him clearly, *"They'll be against you. They'll hate you. They'll attack you. They'll fight you. But they won't win."* Jeremiah is just so hurt with the humiliation. He's saying, *"God, you let me down. God, your word is not true. Your promises are not kept."* Do you know, as Jeremiah talked this out, he began to realize that he wasn't being fair, and he began to realize that God was on his side and that God plus Jeremiah is a ***MAJORITY***.

 ***Mood Swings of Depression and Elation: Songs and Curses***

And his spirits began to ***LIFT*** a little, and he began to say, *"Lord, yes, yes, you* ***ARE*** *on my side---I know. You'll fight for me---I know. Lord, I put my cause in your hands. Let me see vengeance on my enemies. Let me see you deal with them. But Lord, yes, you're going to..."* And he tries to ***LIFT*** himself in his depression. And finally, he says, *"Sing!! Sing!!"* It's an order to himself. He's talking to himself here, and he's trying to make himself say, "*Hallelujah*," anyway. You know, he must have read Merlin Carothers’s book; and he's just saying, *"Praise the Lord!"* It's a command to himself. Verse 13, you see, *"Sing to the Lord. Praise the Lord. For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hand of evil doers."* He's not saying, *"He's delivered me,"* yet. He's saying, *"He has delivered others. So, sing praise; come on,* ***SING****!"* But he can't sing---and you know he ***CAN'T***. He just can't. He tries very hard to whistle to keep his spirits up, but he can't. Now when you're in depression, this violent ***CHANGE OF MOOD*** is characteristic. Great elation followed by a very deep valley---almost immediately. When you are in depression, you get these changes of moods. So, he says, *"Sing to the Lord."* And in the very next breath he says*---"Cursed, cursed."*

So, he goes from ***SINGING*** to ***CURSING*** just like that. And it's understandable, it's a very honest book, the Bible, as I've said. He tried so hard to sing and to praise, but he can't make it. And now he touches the very ***BOTTOM*** of his depression. He becomes quite suicidal, and he starts ***CURSING***, starts lying about him. Here's the man of God cursing. He then curses mother and father for making love and producing him. That really would be more than he could do. So, he gets as near as he can to cursing that. It was his mother and father who were responsible for bringing him into the world, but, oh, he couldn't do that. So he curses the ***BIRTHDAY***, the day he was born, *"Cursed be the day I was born."* And then he curses the man who spread the news around and actually told his dad---who obviously wasn't around when Jeremiah was born, he may have been out in the field somewhere---but a man went from the mother's bed to the father and said, *"Unto you, a son is born."* I'm gonna come back to that announcement in a moment. But those are the words he used. "***CURSED*** is the ***DAY***, ***CURSED*** is the ***MAN*** who said, *"Unto you a son is born."* Cursed, cursed, cursed.

***The Great Question: Why???***

Then he finishes with this question *"****WHY****? Why was I born?"* You know, one of the ***CHARACTERISTICS*** of someone in ***DEPRESSION*** is that they may well curl up in bed and assume the position they were in in their mother's womb---draw their knees up and curl up---wanting to be back in the security of the womb, which we can't remember consciously, but which we do remember unconsciously. And it was a ***SECURE*** world. We didn't face any of the things that we've come to face in the world outside. And so, we curl up; and this is what Jeremiah is doing here. And I can see him now. I think this must have happened at night or in the early hours of the morning. That's when depression is worse. And I can see him curling up in a prenatal position, just curling up and saying, *"Why did I come out of the womb? Why didn't someone abort me? Why didn't I become an abortion? Why? Why didn't they take the fetus and destroy it before it could see the light of day? Why?"* He finishes up with this question, *"Why should a man be born to trouble and shame and sorrow?"* Are you thinking of anyone else at this moment?

Why should the words be said, *"Unto you a son is born,"* when that son would simply face sorrow and shame. ***WHY***? The answer is: God knows what He's doing and He needed a Jeremiah, and He needed another boy called Jesus---for ***SORROW***, for ***SHAME***---because only if someone will bear sorrow and shame can God fulfill his purposes in the world? And the answer to Jeremiah's question he'd had at his ***CALL***. Jeremiah says, *"Why was I born to a life of sorrow?"* And God said, when he called a young man of 17, *"Jeremiah, I want you to be a spokesman and an ambassador to the* ***NATIONS OF THE WORLD****, and tell them about Me."*

You notice it was ***NOT*** a call to be a prophet to ***ISRAEL***. Israel was too far gone. But God wanted Jeremiah to know the sorrow and shame of all that, that the lesson might be learned by America, Britain, China, Russia---every nation of the world. And here we are this morning; and many of you have told me that we've never had Bible studies that seem so relevant to Britain today. And that's ***WHY*** Jeremiah was born to ***SOROW***: that he might be God's ***SPOKESMAN*** to ***ALL*** the nations of the world, and that he might speak to people. And here we are, 1975, and everywhere I go, almost every person I talk to today, it seems as if Jeremiah is coming alive. Billy Graham said just a week or two ago, "I hope that all preachers around the world will get into the prophet ***JEREMIAH***". He said that after I'd got into it. But nevertheless, I'd have listened to that if he had said it before. And all over the place, I'm finding people are turning to this book. And here Jeremiah is being a spokesman to the nations at ***THIS*** moment. And indeed, a thought came to me this morning---just this morning---of how I could spread my little exposition of Jeremiah in a new way to many more people that they might hear. Thousands will hear through tape. But nevertheless, he showed me another way that I could get this word out to the world of today, just this morning. And Jeremiah ***WILL*** speak, and ***IS*** speaking. That's ***WHY*** he had to go through that. That's why. I must hurry on. Let's look at the ***LAST*** thing.

***Why Chapter 21 Appears Out of Chronological Order***

We're back to ***PROSE*** in chapter 21, the first 10 verses. Many years have elapsed between chapter 20 and 21, though it comes next in the book. Jeremiah has ***NOT*** been compiled in ***CHRONOLOGICAL*** order. And we have to ask ***WHY*** did the editor put chapter 21 next to chapter 20? WHY did he take something from many years on and put it next to this? Well, let's just look briefly at what happens in chapter 21 and then just ask, finally, ***WHY*** did he put it next to chapter 20? It is presented as a sequel, but it was not the immediate sequel. There's a man called Pashhur in chapter 21, who may or may not be the same Pashhur as in chapter 20. I have no idea. He may or may not be. If it is the ***SAME***, then there's a very ironic twist has taken place. There is a new king on the throne.

Instead of Jehoiakim, which was chapter 20, we now have ***ZEDEKIAH***, the last and the weakest king of Israel. And the situation now is that Babylon is so expanded that Babylonian troops are around Jerusalem, ringing the city. And Zedekiah, the king, wonders what to do. He knows they can hold out for quite a long time in siege. He knows they could send a message to Egypt for help. He's in a ***POLITICAL SITUATION***; he needs desperately to make the right decision, or he could lose everything. And to whom does the king turn for advice? To the man whom Pashhur put in the stocks. That's the glorious ***IRONY*** of this chapter. When the king really wanted to know what to do, he said, *"Pashhur, go and ask Jeremiah".* And from being a publicly ***RIDICULED*** figure in the stocks, Jeremiah is now the ***COUNSELOR*** of kings---the royal advisor. That's what God can do with a man who's ***FAITHFUL***. He may be the ***LAUGHINGSTOCK*** of the man in the street, but he will ***SPEAK*** to kings. That's what happened to our Lord Jesus too. They laughed at him on the cross, but today he's King of kings and Lord of lords. God ***EXALTS***, those who've been humbled.

And so, Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah and said, *"Are the Babylonians likely to win, or not? Shall we fight, or not? Shall we go to Egypt for help, or not? Tell me?"* And Jeremiah gives him an ***ANSWER***. It's very disturbing. Jeremiah said*, "King Zedekiah, 'give him this message,' I looked out and I saw the Babylonian troops, and behind them I could see their general. I could see the one in charge and it was* ***GOD****. It was God, Zedekiah.* ***GOD*** *is directing their troops. We don't stand a chance."*

***The King Desperately Seeks Jeremiah's Counsel***

It was a ***HARD*** answer. It was an ***HONEST*** answer. He said, *"I can see them besieging this city until we're eating each other...until pestilence is spread through the city; and I can see us with nothing left. And so, that's my answer to your question, Zedekiah. And to the answer I add a word of* ***ADVICE****. My advice is that every man and woman and child who can do so, should go out of the city and* ***SURRENDER*** *now to the Babylonians. The only thing I can promise you---if you do it---is that you'll keep your life. You will keep nothing else. You'll be taken away to a far country. But, if you surrender now, at least you'll still live...and while there's* ***LIFE****, there's* ***HOPE****. If you don't surrender, you die! I set before you life and death:* ***DEATH****, if you fight;* ***LIFE****, if you surrender.”*

There come ***POINTS*** in human history---the point came in France in 1940---the point comes where the leaders of a nation have to make the most ***DIFFICULT DECISION*** of all. And that is to ***SURRENDER*** and choose ***LIFE***---any sort of a life---rather than ***FIGHT*** and choose ***DEATH***. When we visited Jersey in October, we became very conscious of the awful decision they had to make when the Germans came to the Channel Islands. And they decided to surrender and have life---any sort of life---rather than fight and have certain death. It is a difficult decision. Those who make it will be accused of ***TREASON***. They will be regarded as unpatriotic. But it takes a profound patriotism, when that point is reached, to surrender. It takes a profound love of your country to ***PRESERVE*** something of it. And it's one of the most ***DIFFICULT*** decisions a leader can ever make. And Jeremiah said, *"Zedekiah, make that decision, I beg you!* ***SURRENDER*** *now. It's life or death. If you stay and fight, it' s death. If you surrender, it's life---but just life; you'll just snatch life."*

Jeremiah was going to be ***IMPRISONED*** and put on trial for ***TREASON*** for this advice. He was going to be regarded as a traitor to his country. In fact, he was a ***PATRIOT***! He set it out of love for his country. But he would be regarded as an enemy---as a quisling. And he would be tried for treason, as our Lord Jesus was also, (as an enemy of peace). But I will say this for Jeremiah: even though this was his advice: *"Any man, get out and surrender,"* Jeremiah didn't take his own advice. He ***STAYED*** to the end. He could have gone then and saved his life, but he didn't. He stayed. He was free to go, but he stayed. And when the city and the king were taken off to Babylon, Jeremiah was ***DELIVERED*** by the Lord. He stayed home. It's a remarkable story. A man who was so depressed that he said, *"Why? What can I do? What's the use? I'm getting nowhere. You've trapped me. You've deceived me. I'm not getting anywhere."* And a few years later, that man is controlling the ***DESTINY*** of his nation. He's speaking to kings, (he's sought), his advice is sought by those at the very top. That's what God can do with a man who may feel it's hopeless and useless---that he can do nothing.

***A Last Word***

My last word is this. When Jeremiah was so depressed, I want you to notice that God said ***NOTHING*** to him. And that's one of the most awful features of deep depression: that we can't hear God speaking. It seems if He's not there and He's not concerned. And in all of chapter 20 God says absolutely ***NOTHING***. Was this because God wasn't speaking, or because Jeremiah wasn't hearing? I think it may have been a bit of both. But you know, when you accuse God unjustly, God doesn't argue. He doesn't defend Himself. He just ***WAITS PATIENTLY*** until you can talk rationally. And if God had spoken when Jeremiah was in deep depression, it would've done no good. They'd just have had a slanging match between them. God knows ***WHEN*** to be silent. And contrary though it may seem to common sense, in fact, God did ***WELL*** to leave Jeremiah alone when Jeremiah was saying such things, and ***NOT*** to answer. And somehow, through not speaking, God was able to use what I might call *'the passion of Jeremiah'* to ***BRING HIM THROUGH*** and to make him the consultant of kings.

Oh, I can't finish without just drawing attention to the ***BREAD*** and the ***WINE*** in front of you. Said Jeremiah, *"Cursed is the day that the man said unto you, 'A son is born,' because he was born to sorrow and shame."* You can't help but think of Jesus, can you? *"Unto you a son is born."* And he was a man of ***SORROWS*** and acquainted with ***GRIEF***, bearing shame and scoffing rude. And the remarkable thing is, that the very spot where Jeremiah was tortured in the stocks, was the ***VERY*** spot where Jesus was put on the cross. It says He was taken out on the north side of the temple and put in the stocks. And that's the place that later became ***GOLGOTHA***. And once again, the parallel between Jesus and Jeremiah is so clear. And Jesus on the cross, in the same place, weighed down with the humiliation, the shame, the suffering of it all---pressed down in depression---cried out, *"My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?"* And you notice that God said ***NOTHING*** at that time. Nothing!! But Jesus came through it, and finally said*, "Into Thy hands, I commit My spirit,"* as Jeremiah came through it, and committed his cause to the Lord. And ***BOTH*** were ***DELIVERED*** and ***EXALTED*** and given a new position.

So, when you ***ARE*** depressed; when you feel, "Why was I born at all?".... when you're going through it like this (and when you're saying all kinds of unjust things against God) God will ***NOT*** reply. He'll ***NOT*** argue with you. He's too great a God to do that. But as soon as you commit your cause to the Lord, He will bring you through. And He'll lift you up and He'll give you (I promise you this) a ***GREATER*** ministry than you had before. And He'll give you words to say to people you've never spoken to before. And He'll set you high upon a rock.

Let us pray. "Heavenly Father, once again You've enabled us to get inside the heart of your servant, Jeremiah. How we look forward to meeting him one day in heaven, just to thank him for being so honest with us. Lord, will you help us to be honest with each other and to share with each other when we are going through it? Lord, will you help us to do what Jeremiah did: to commit our cause to You and wait till You've set us up again? And heavenly Father, we've entered, again, from a very unexpected angle into the passion of our Lord Jesus and how He, under that same pressure of public ridicule, shouted out, "Why?" And the black night descended on His soul; and even the sun was darkened. Must have been terrible. But thank you, Lord, that He came through.... for our salvation!! And that, as You destined Jeremiah to be the prophet of sorrow and shame that he might be the spokesman to the nations, we thank You for the other Boy that was born to sorrow and shame, that He might be the Savior and Lord of the nations, even Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."