

*"In many and various ways, God spoke of old to our fathers through the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us in his* ***SON****, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high."* Father, we thank you that you're a God who talks. We pray that we may today be a people who listen. For your namesake, our amen.
Let's sing together. Hymn number 247.

*God hath spoken by his prophets,*

*Spoken his unchanging word,*

*Each from age to age proclaiming*

*God the one, the righteous Lord.*

*Mid the world's despair and turmoil.*

*One firm anchor, holding fast,*

*God is on his throne, eternal,*

*He alone the first and last*

247.

***SINGING*** (2 minutes)

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we marvel that you should concern yourself with us and that you should wish to communicate with us, but the greatest marvel of all, is that you have spoken to us in ***JESUS***. He is your authentic word conveying the truth to us---that ***SINGLE WORD***, which consolidates all wisdom, that ***DIRECT WORD***, which comes to the point. And ***IN HIM*** you speak in a way which really gets through to us. Please make us ***LISTEN*** for our sanity's sake. We thank you that, in Jesus, you talk to us as no one else can. You plumb the depths of our despair and yearning, and speak in answer to our lonely need. ***THROUGH HIM***, you converse with us and mediate yourself. We thank you too that he has become the mediator between us and other people---the very channel of communication, and ground of friendship. And now we can talk with all, in true tones of understanding through Jesus Christ. Oh Father, in Christ you broke forever the silence of creation, and began with men a conversation which must lead into deep fellowship. But we, we break off communication with our fellows when we please and must confess that we have apparently preferred the silence which breeds misunderstanding and hate. In Christ you ended all ambiguity. He is yes, and yes, and amen. But we are so glib. We try by our eloquence to bring together what is false and what is true, and make our words tell half-truths and lies. In Christ you speak with an economy which reduces wisdom to simplicity; but we use our words without care so that they are blunted in their meaning, and we lose regard for truth. In Christ you speak a word which ***RECONCILES*** and ***BUILDS UP***, but we use words to hurt and destroy. Oh Father, we thank you for your precious word to us in Jesus, spoken with care and at cost. Teach us how to talk to one another in truth, and not to waste words. We thank you for giving us words to speak, and we pray for ourselves and all who use and misuse this gift. We ***PRAY*** for those who take no delight in conversation, who stonewall the advances of others and slow down all communication. We ***PRAY*** for those who let their tongues run away with them in idle gossip, who talk themselves silly, and for all their many words say nothing. We ***PRAY*** for those who talk to impress, and even to keep others at a distance by bombarding them with monologues of prejudice and self-justification, and never stop to listen. We ***PRAY*** for those who use words, not to enlighten but to conceal the truth and put off the day of action---lying words by which they not only fool others but deceive themselves. We praise you that already, by your Spirit you speak on man's behalf with sighs too deep for words. And we ***PRAY*** that all may find speech echoing your thoughts. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Let's turn now to God's word. We turn to the prophet Jeremiah, which we have been studying now for nearly 12 months. And this morning we're going to read chapter 36. We're going to have ***TWO*** sermons this morning: chapter 36 ***FIRST***, and ***THEN (SECOND)*** a little later in the service I'm going to read chapter 45, which is only five verses and belongs to chapter 36.

*In the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to* ***JEREMIAH*** *from the Lord: “Take a scroll and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel and Judah and all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah until today. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I intend to do to them, so that everyone may turn from his evil way, and that I may* ***FORGIVE*** *their iniquity and their sin.”*

*Then Jeremiah called* ***BARUCH*** *the son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote upon a scroll at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the Lord which he had spoken to him. And Jeremiah ordered Baruch, saying, “I am debarred from going to the house of the Lord; so, you are to go, and on a fast day in the hearing of all the people in the Lord’s house you shall read the words of the Lord from the scroll which you have written at my dictation. You shall read them also in the hearing of all the men of Judah who come out of their cities.****IT MAY BE*** *that their supplication will come before the Lord, and that everyone will* ***TURN*** *from his evil way, for great is the* ***ANGER*** *and* ***WRATH*** *that the Lord has pronounced against this people.” And Baruch the son of Neriah did all that Jeremiah the prophet ordered him about reading from the scroll the words of the Lord in the Lord’s house.*

*In the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, in the ninth month, all the people in Jerusalem and all the people who came from the cities of Judah to Jerusalem proclaimed a fast before the Lord. Then, in the hearing of all the people, Baruch read the words of Jeremiah from the scroll, in the house of the Lord, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the secretary, which was in the upper court, at the entry of the New Gate of the Lord’s house.*

*When Micaiah the son of Gemariah, son of Shaphan, heard all the words of the Lord from the scroll, he went down to the king’s house, into the secretary’s chamber; and all the princes were sitting there: Elishama the secretary, Delaiah the son of Shemaiah, Elnathan the son of Achbor, Gemariah the son of Shaphan, Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the princes. And Micaiah told them all the words that he had heard when Baruch read the scroll in the hearing of the people. Then all the princes sent Jehudi the son of Nethaniah, son of Shelemiah, son of Cushi, to say to Baruch, “Take in your hand the scroll that you read in the hearing of the people, and come.” So, Baruch the son of Neriah took the scroll in his hand and came to them. And they said to him, “Sit down and read it.” So, Baruch read it to them. When they heard all the words, they turned one to another in* ***FEAR****; and they said to Baruch, “We must report all these words to the king.” Then they asked Baruch, “Tell us, how did you write all these words? Was it at his dictation?” Baruch answered them, “He dictated all these words to me, while I wrote them with ink on the scroll.” Then the princes said to Baruch, “Go and* ***HIDE****, you and Jeremiah, and let no one know where you are.”*

*So, they went into the court to the king, having put the scroll in the chamber of Elishama the secretary; and they reported all the words to the king. Then the king sent Jehudi to get the scroll, and he took it from the chamber of Elishama the secretary; and Jehudi read it to the king and all the princes who stood beside the king. It was the ninth month, and the king was sitting in the winter house and there was a fire burning in the brazier before him. As Jehudi read three or four columns, the king would cut them off with a penknife and throw them into the fire in the brazier, until the entire scroll was consumed in the fire that was in the brazier. Yet neither the king, nor any of his servants who heard all these words, was afraid, nor did they rend their garments. Even when Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah urged the king not to burn the scroll* ***HE WOULD NOT LISTEN TO THEM****. And the king commanded Jerahmeel the king’s son and Seraiah the son of Azriel and Shemaiah the son of Abdeel to seize Baruch the secretary and Jeremiah the prophet, but the Lord hid them.*

*Now, after the king had burned the scroll with the words which Baruch wrote at Jeremiah’s dictation, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: “Take* ***ANOTHER SCROLL*** *and write on it all the former words that were in the first scroll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah has burned. And concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah you shall say, ‘Thus says the Lord, you have burned this scroll, saying, “Why have you written in it that the king of Babylon will certainly come and destroy this land, and will cut off from it man and beast?’ Therefore, thus says the Lord concerning* ***JEHOIAKIM*** *king of Judah, He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David, and his dead body shall be cast out to the heat by day and the frost by night. And I will* ***PUNISH*** *him and his offspring and his servants for their iniquity; I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them, but they would not hear.’”*

*Then Jeremiah took* ***ANOTHER SCROLL*** *and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah, who wrote on it at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the scroll which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire; and many similar words were* ***ADDED*** *to them.*

***The Bible is a Miraculous Book***

In the last chapter of the book of Ecclesiastes, it says, "Of making ***BOOKS***, there is ***NO END***." And if that was true centuries before Christ, what is it like ***NOW***---having got the invention of printing, tape recording, microfilming? You know, while I was at Cambridge, they built a new library for the university, and in that library, there were 18 miles of bookshelves! 18 miles! And before I left Cambridge, those shelves were half full. And every book that is published in Britain (as you know) has to go to Cambridge and Oxford University libraries to be kept for reference. ***'OF MAKING BOOKS THERE IS NO END'***.

But there is only ***ONE BOOK*** worth reading, really, and it is this one. And if a man does not read ***THIS*** book, he is not wise. He may be very clever; he may be very knowledgeable; but he is not wise. This is the ***ONLY*** book there is that makes one ***WISE*** --- wise in the most important area in your life --- namely wise in ***SALVATION***. You may be knowledgeable in ***EDUCATION***, but until you are wise in ***SALVATION***---you are not equipped for the next world. You may be equipped for this one by reading other books, but if you have not read ***THIS*** one, you are not equipped for the ***NEXT*** one.

It's a miracle in itself: written by 40 different authors, in at least three different languages, over at least 1400 years --- and not one of them knew that they were writing the Bible! And yet, here it is, ***THIS BOOK***. And its ***THEME*** is the same from beginning to end. It hangs together with a marvelous ***UNITY***. It is such a ***STRAIGHTFORWARD*** book that a simple child can read it and get something from it. It is such a ***PROFOUND*** book, that the greatest intellect in the world can spend a lifetime studying it, and still say at the end, "I have not plumbed its depths. I am still in the ***SHALLOWS*** as far as this book goes." It is a ***TIMELESS*** book, and it's the most ***TIMELY*** book that was ever written. And it's more ***LASTING AND PERMANENT*** than anything else you can see. Heaven and earth may pass away, but these words will not. For this is the truth of God, and God is everlasting, and his word is everlasting.

***God Talks… and Writes… and Speaks Through Men***

Now, I'm just so thankful that God is neither dumb nor illiterate. Idols are, but God is not. Idols cannot talk, but ***GOD TALKS***. Idols cannot write, but ***GOD WRITES***. Now there are times when God speaks without any human aid whatever. He causes the air to vibrate so that words are heard by the human ear. We shall be thinking about one such occasion tonight, when we baptize some people. We shall be thinking about the time, when at his own baptism (at Jesus' baptism in the river Jordan) the heavens shook and people thought it was thundering, but then the thunder formed itself into words: "***THIS***...***YOU*** are my beloved son, and I'm so pleased with you!"

There are times when God does HIS ***OWN WRITING***. It was with his own ***FINGER*** that he wrote the Ten Commandments on the tables of stone, in Moses' presence. It was with his own ***FINGER*** that, at Belshazzar's feast, he wrote on the wall, ***'MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN***.' So, God can talk and write without human help. But praise God! The way he wants to work, usually, is with ***HUMAN*** cooperation---using co-workers to be his mouthpiece to ***SPEAK***, and his hand to ***WRITE***. And that is how we got our Bible --- Because there were men who were willing to have God's words put in their mouth, and who were willing to see that it got written down. And this Bible is the record of hundreds of years of God's conversations with men. And the men whose portraits are behind me now, are the men whose ***MOUTHS*** were used, and whose ***HANDS*** were used. There is one writing up in the top left. And there is someone else with some documents somewhere, but I... Isaiah in the middle! ***ISAIAH*** wrote down what he said. So did ***AMOS***. Amos also saw that he wrote down. And others--- their words were taken down, and written up, by the ***SCHOOLS OF THE PROPHETS***. And here we have the results. Do you realize that if they hadn't written them down, we wouldn't know what Jeremiah had said? Because it would be an incredible thing, if now, 2,400 years later, somebody remembered verbatim what Jeremiah had said 2000 miles from here; and could tell you about it this morning! I know that in those days, memory was good... when writing was a little-known art--- except by those who had had a special education. And ***MEMORY*** passed down folklore and sayings very accurately over a long period. But God wanted something even ***MORE RELIABLE*** than memory. The Chinese have a proverb that, 'The weakest ***INK*** is stronger than the strongest ***MEMORY***.' And I've learned that in my daily life, as I guess you have! Make a list, and then you won't forget!

***The Spoken and Written Word of God Contrasted***

Now, the circumstances in which the 'spoken word' became the 'written word' in Jeremiah's life are very interesting. But before I describe them for you, let me ***CONTRAST*** the ***'SPOKEN WORD'*** and the ***'WRITTEN WORD.***' Both have advantages and both have disadvantages.

The ***'SPOKEN WORD'*** is usually more immediately effective than the written. It has greater impact. It comes with tone of voice. It comes through the ***PERSONALITY***. Black and white print does not. You don't get the ***FEEL*** of a person from black and white print; but you do when you're ***LISTENING*** to his voice. You know how he feels when he is speaking. And so, the 'spoken word' has ***IMMEDIATE IMPACT***. And that is why God so often uses the 'spoken word' to achieve ***MIRACLES***. He caused this world to come to be with a 'spoken word.' He said, "Let there be," and there was! He just had to say it, and it was as good as done! So, his 'spoken word' is ***POWERFUL***, and that's why ***PREACHING*** will never be out of date. The man who designed Guildford Cathedral thought it would be (preaching out of date), and so, he almost hid the pulpit at the bottom of the pillar! And he believed that worship would almost entirely be ***VISUAL*** and ***MUSICAL*** in that building. And it's perfect for visual and musical worship. It's hopeless to ***SPEAK*** in! But there will ***NEVER*** be a time when preaching the word is obsolete. Announcing the good news, man to man, is God's way of achieving ***MIRACLES*** of rebirth and new lives.

Having said that, God wanted us to have his ***'WRITTEN WORD'*** too, because there are ***DISADVANTAGES*** to the 'spoken word.' One is - that as soon as it's said, it's FINISHED. You can't take it all home. You probably will take about 2 to 3% of what I say this morning home. That doesn't worry me a bit. I am not here to fill your head with knowledge. I am here to let ***GOD SPEAK TO YOU*** at some point. And if he just says one sentence to you this morning, and you take that home, it's been worth it. And that's why I put a lot of different thoughts into one sermon---not to cram your head, but so that a greater variety of people can get one thing to take home. The rest is gone from you, and the *'spoken word'* is quickly ***FORGOTTEN***. And if I asked you what the preacher preached on last Sunday, you might just remember. If I asked you what he preached on six weeks ago (a visiting preacher), you'd have a more difficult task. And if I asked you about that preacher that came 12 months ago, you would say, "Well, I remember he was very good and I was touched; but for the life me, I can't think what he preached on." That's the ***DISADVANTAGE*** of the 'spoken word.' It's like a river in the Negev. And it filters away into the dry sand. There are other disadvantages of the 'spoken word.' One is - that you can only see the ***‘SPOKEN WORD***,' ...or get it, a ***LITTLE BIT AT A TIME***. Whereas, when it's ***PRINTED*** and ***WRITTEN***, you can get the ***WHOLE THING***, as a whole. You can read it right through, and then go back and read parts of it again. And you can get the WHOLE of it! You don't just get the little fragments that keep coming in the existential moment.

And so, God knew all this; and therefore, God said, *"My word is going to be* ***WRITTEN****. And then people will get it* ***WHOLE****! And they have got* ***ALL*** *of what I have said to man. They don't get it in* ***FRAGMENTS****. And even if they forget it, they can then go and read it again and* ***RECALL*** *it and* ***REFRESH*** *their minds."* And so, God put it down. Furthermore, God knew that if he relied on the *'spoken word’*, then he relied on the existence of the ***MAN*** and the presence of the ***MAN***. And anything could happen to that ***MAN***. If you are not where he happens to be speaking, you will not hear. And if he is ill or dies, then the message ***STOPS***. But if it is ***WRITTEN DOWN***, then these handicaps are overcome. ***THE BOOK CAN GO WHERE THE MESSENGER CAN'T!*** The message will spread! The message will go where the man can never go! And so, the 'written word' has this great advantage. And too, when the man is sick or dies, and is removed from the scene, ***HIS MESSAGE GOES ON.*** And he, being dead, yet speaks! And here we are reading the book of Jeremiah this morning. Why? Because ***SOMEBODY WROTE IT DOWN***. And the 'written word' becomes God's 'spoken word' to us. And God goes on SPEAKING through the words he said because it was ***WRITTEN***!

Now the particular circumstances.... Or even, before I go onto that, I'll just say something which I want to pick up later. In our day, praise God, inventions are coming which are enabling us to encapsulate the word of God even ***MORE EFFECTIVELY***---the invention of ***PRINTING*** for example. Gutenberg invented movable print so that the Bible could be spread more ***QUICKLY***, and more ***CHEAPLY***, and more ***EASILY***. And since we have had printing, the word of God has gone places no missionary has been.

And churches have sprung up ***WITHOUT A SINGLE PREACHER***, because they have had the *'written word*.' In Latin America, a Bible floated down a long river (200 miles), and somebody picked it up and read it. And before long, there was a church there --- because of the 'written word!' And the Bible Society can tell you ***HUNDREDS*** of stories like that! A man in a New York subway car was a pickpocket. He put his hand into someone's pocket, felt some leather, and he thought it was a fat wallet full of notes (bank notes*).* Full of notes! And he pulled it out. And he got off the subway, and dashed around the corner and looked at it--- and it was a New Testament! And he was about to throw it away. He thought he had got a fat wallet, but he took it home and decided to read it. That man is now one of the most prominent ***PREACHERS*** in the United States. His life was transformed!

***There is a Medium That Combines the Spoken and Written Word***

The ***INVENTION*** that we have got ***TODAY*** puts together the 'spoken' and the 'written' word. The invention of ***TAPES AND CASSETTES***! And I just praise God for that invention because it has the best of ***BOTH WORLDS!*** It is not only in ***PERMANENT FORM*** so that you have got the whole and so that you can refer to it.... It not only can go where the man cannot.... It not only survives a man's illness or death.... But it enshrines the ***IMPACT*** of the ***'SPOKEN WORD’.*** Hallelujah for tape recording...and for the spool that's turning at the back of this building now, which will be heard by thousands more people than hear my voice now. We praise God for that invention, which has brought together the ***'SPOKEN'*** and the ***'WRITTEN'*** word in a most effective form. It's as if God knew that the population increase needed some new invention to get the word out quickly. So those tapes ***GO***, as you will hear later, to 75 countries of the world --- ***TAKING*** the word of God where I could never travel --- ***TAKING*** this truth to set men free!

***How Jeremiah’s Words Came to be Written Down***

 Well now let's come back to Jeremiah. We're getting off the track. Jeremiah chapter 36 describes how his words came first to be ***WRITTEN***. And the circumstances were these: The year was 604 BC. ...604 BC. And Jeremiah.... (I'm sorry, should I say 504? I'll have to check that up afterwards.... No, 604.... I'm right.) And the circumstances are these: Little Israel in the middle of the world, the ***CROSSROADS*** of the continents---Africa, Asia, Europe. Now I've said before, if you live in the crossroads, you will get run over again and again. And they have been. Little Israel, in the middle of the world, was trapped between two powers --- East and West (***EGYPT*** and ***BABYLON***) ---and as with so many little nations, wondering which one to back, which one to play off against the other. And King Jehoiakim put his money on ***EGYPT*** and said, *"I think they will be the biggest power in the world. So, let's make friends with the West."* And he was ***MISTAKEN***. And in the year 604 BC there was a mighty battle between these two big powers. It was a world war, and it was decisively settled on the banks of the Euphrates, at a place called ***CARCHEMISH***. And at that battle, the Egyptians were routed. From then on, the ***EAST*** was to be the big power. And Israel had backed the ***WEST***.... found herself trapped in her own political intrigue in the realm of foreign policy.

Now Jeremiah had for years been saying, *"There will come a great power from the* ***NORTH****."* And of course, though Babylon was northeast, they had to come round the river---the Fertile Crescent---and so they would enter Israel from the ***NORTH***. And Jeremiah had been saying...but he hadn't said ***WHO*** it would be. He had been saying for years, *"A great power will come from the* ***NORTH*** *and trample right through this land,"* ...as the Bible says, that will happen ***AGAIN*** one day: great power from the ***NORTH*** will come right through that land and ***INVADE*** it. But ***NOW***, Jeremiah began to say ***WHO*** the power would be. He said, *"It's* ***BABYLON****! I told you so! All my predictions of 21 years are now coming true. Now, you will have to believe, because you have no choice."* And Jeremiah realized---as others realized---that that battle of Carchemish in 604 BC was the ***BEGINNING OF THE END***. They realized that this was the end of Israel, or what was left of it. There were only ***TWO*** tribes left, under the name of ***JUDAH*** (the largest of the two tribes). The other was ***BENJAMIN***. And the two tribes were left---a little pocket of Israel. Jeremiah knew that Babylon was coming ---and that it was all over. He did not then know that he would be the only man---or the only one of two men---who would be left ***FREE***. But he was concerned about the Word of God.

And this is how his mind worked. He ***REMEMBERED*** how...not long before, when he had predicted that the land would be taken... He ***REMEMBERED*** how he'd gone to a solicitor's clerk called ***'BARUCH'***, and he had said to the solicitor's clerk, *"Will you arrange for me to buy a field in my native village, Anathoth, from my relative? He wants to sell and get the cash."* So, he had said to Baruch, *"Will you arrange the title deeds; and then will you take the two deeds---the two copies---and will you put them in a jar and seal it and bury it so that it's safe so that, one day, my descendants can come and claim those title deeds when Israel gets her land back?"* And that solicitor's clerk duly saw the sale of the land through and ***BURIED*** the title deeds. And Jeremiah thought of Baruch again; and God said, *"Go and use him again, and this time write down all that I've said through you; and get him to look after that too."* So, off he went to this solicitor's clerk, Baruch. He said, *"I have another job for you. It's gonna take a little longer, this one. I want you to write down everything I've said over the last 21 years."*

Now you can imagine Baruch's eyes. For one thing, there's a miracle of ***MEMORY*** involved here. How would Jeremiah be able to remember ***ALL*** he'd said? I can't remember what I said last Sunday hardly. How could Jeremiah remember everything he said over 21 years? Well, it would ***NOT*** be a question of ***GOD*** having to repeat himself. It would be a question of the ***HOLY SPIRIT*** releasing memory. Because one of the things psychologists now know is that you remember ***EVERYTHING*** you've said, ***EVERYTHING*** you've done, ***EVERYTHING*** you've ever felt and thought. Did you know that? I think you must know that from time-to-time ***MEMORIES*** are stirred by a ***CITCUMSTANCE***---memories which you had not thought about in 25 years. I've just been up to my hometown where I was born and bred, and you know the first thing I saw when I got there was a barrage balloon. It was there. The parachuters were jumping from it. And you know, my stomach turned over because I remember as a boy of 12 in the Battle of Britain, crouching in an Anderson shelter listening to the crack of shells and the thump of bombs. And that barrage balloon just brought back feelings that I'd hadn't had in years. And I knew then that I had not forgotten. I had just not been able to recall. And locked in your little brain---it's incredible---but locked in your brain is ***EVERYTHING*** you've thought and felt and said. Drugs can release those memories. Hypnosis can release those memories. And the Holy Spirit can release those memories too... and recall.

***The Assistance of the Holy Spirit***

And this is what happened to Jeremiah. ***A MIRACLE OF RECALLING*** came. Do you remember Jesus on the last night before he died? He said to his disciples, "Now, I've told you a whole lot of things, but it's all right. You'll remember them. The Holy Spirit will bring them back to your remembrance and you'll be able to speak them out, write them down---you'll be able to share them. And that's how we got our New Testament. The Holy Spirit ***RECALLS*** the memory, ***RELEASES*** the things that are there that are locked up in that filing cabinet. And the Holy Spirit pulls the drawer out and gives you the thing you need. That's how you're able to use the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. That doesn't mean the Bible, it means a ***RECALLED WORD OF GOD*** which you pull out by the Spirit to use.

Well now, Jeremiah was to ***WRITE DOWN*** and ***DICTATE***; and this he did. It was the ***LAST*** despairing effort to reach the conscience of his countrymen. He had preached and preached and preached, and they'd just taken no notice for 21 years. And so, Jeremiah says, *"If I wrote it ALL down and they got it ALL in one fell swoop---if they got the whole lot in one day---would they* ***LISTEN****?”*

After the Yom Kippur war, the Chief Rabbi in Jerusalem, he called Israel to ***REPENTANCE***, and he preached a sermon calling the nation to repentance and reminding them of the SINS he believed had contributed to the defeat on that occasion. But he knew that his sermon would be quickly lost. And so, he took a page in the Jerusalem Chronicle and in other papers, and he ***LISTED*** the sins of Israel. Number 5 was their bad driving on the roads. They all learn in tanks, you know, and it tends to follow through. And he listed 25 (was it?) sins, and he wrote them down; and the impact of that list was pretty powerful.

And so, Jeremiah said, if I ***WRITE IT ALL DOWN*** for Jerusalem, will it take notice? And so, Baruch sat down. Can you imagine the tedium? No Pitman Shorthand in those days. A reed sharpened with a pen knife---they had pen knives in those days, one is mentioned later---and he wrote word-by-word what we know as Chapters 1 to 25 of the Book of Jeremiah. ***HE WROTE IT ALL DOWN***. Then said Jeremiah, *"I can't go to the House of the Lord. I've been* ***BANNED****."* Now we don't know how or why he was banned. I guess it was after he had that little argument with Pashur the high priest, and Pashur put him in the stocks. But from then on prophets and priests were so far apart that Jeremiah couldn't step inside the temple.

And so, he said, *"I can't go there; wait until the next big* ***NATIONAL FAST****.”* For they held their national days---and especially with the world powers pushing them around and this tiny nation wondering if it could hold onto its little piece of land. They had national days of prayer... national days of fasting. And Jeremiah said, *"Wait till the next."* It wasn't until the middle of ***DECEMBER***, and it was a very cold day. But on the next fast day, the next national day when people came from all over Judah to pray and fast and say, *"Lord, can we not keep this land?"* Jeremiah said to Baruch, *"Now go and read all this."* And Baruch went and he stood up there, and he must have put on an extra overcoat. We know it was ***SHIVERING***. The king was shivering over a fire in his palace. And on that cold December day, Baruch brought cold comfort to those people, and he went right through ***EVERYTHING*** it's taken us 12 months to read and study. He went right through it. And the people ***LISTENED***.

That must have been quite a feat for Baruch, you know, to read all that through. I've found if I've read two chapters, or three even once, that you were getting ***TIRED*** at the end. He read the whole lot; and he read it right the way through. There was a meeting at the time of the local ***ARISTOCRACY***...the local governors... the Council---not the priests; they didn't like it one bit. But the Council heard about it, and they said, *"Baruch, come and read that to us."* And so, Baruch---for the second time that day---read right through Chapters 1 to 25 of Jeremiah. ***SECOND*** time it was read---it was going to be read a ***THIRD*** time in one day. So, he read it through to the Council. And the Council, they were afraid. Now what were they afraid of? I just wish they'd been afraid of GOD, but they were not. They were afraid of ***MAN***. And that comes out in what they did. They said *"Baruch, how did you get this? Did that man dictate it to you?"* And Baruch said, *"Yes. He dictated every word." "Well Baruch, for your own sake---for your own skin---get out of here quick. Get Jeremiah and go into* ***HIDING*** *because we'll have to tell the king. It will come back to his ears, and he'll say, 'Why wasn't I told about this document?' And we've got to* ***TELL HIM****, but we, we're scared of how he'll react... because if this document is* ***RIGHT****, the king has been* ***WRONG****. If* ***BABYLON*** *is going to be the big power, the power of the* ***EAST****, and we've been relying on the* ***WEST****, our whole foreign policy has been* ***WRONG****. And it's the king that's been telling us that it's the west that will win. And what he'll do when he hears this, I do not know. Get out of here quickly."*

And these poor counselors, they were torn with ***FEAR OF MAN***. They wanted to ***PROTECT*** Jeremiah and Baruch---they half agreed with them. On the other hand, they didn't want to fall out with the king, and they showed a typical ***POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY***. And so, they took the document into the king, and they read it again, and the king listened, and he was ***FURIOUS***! ***HE WAS UNWILLING TO FACE THE TRUTH***, because this document said, *"You are* ***WRONG****, you are wrong; and you are not only wrong, you are* ***EVIL****...and that is* ***WHY*** *you are* ***WRONG****."*

And you know, for a man---especially a man in a high position---to admit his mistakes and say, "I'm wrong and I'm evil," that takes a lot of ***GRACE***. And Jehoiakim ***DIDN'T HAVE*** that grace. And he took the ***KNIFE*** that he used to sharpen his reed pen... and he took that pen knife... Now the ***SCROLL*** would be a very long piece of paper rolled up at either end, and you would read it by unrolling one end and rolling up the other. And the ***HEBREW*** would be in columns up and down read from right to left. And as each three or four columns were read, he said, *"Give me that."* And he would ***TEAR IT*** with the pen knife, and he'd throw that piece on the ***FIRE***, and then another piece on the fire, and another piece. And all that work was ***GONE***.

***The Resiliency of God’s Word***

But, you know, ***YOU CAN'T DESTROY GOD'S WORD***. You can fight against it, you can burn it, you can do anything you like with it... ***"BUT MY WORD SHALL NOT PASS AWAY."*** And we know that the only result of it was that it was ***DUPLICATED AGAIN***. How different from his father (Jehoiakim was). When ***JOSIAH***, his father, had the law read to him---a newly discovered copy of the law that had been discovered in a cupboard in the temple when they were spring cleaning---when Josiah heard that he said, ***"WE'RE FINISHED UNLESS WE REPENT***". He called a whole nation to ***REPENTANCE***, and said, *"We've all been* ***WRONG****. I've been* ***WRONG****. The people have been* ***WRONG****."* And he called the ***NATION*** to say, *“Sorry,"* to God. But when his son Jehoiakim heard the ***SAME MESSAGE*** from God through this document, he was so ***CROSS***...he was so ***FURIOUS***. I think that showed he knew he was wrong, because, you know, when you are fighting against the truth you get more and more cross. And he cut it up and burned it. And when the word got back to Jeremiah, God said, *"Jeremiah dictate the whole thing* ***AGAIN****, and add some* ***MORE*** *about* ***JEHOIAKIM****.*" And he added some more: *"Jehoiakim, you will* ***NOT*** *have a royal line to follow you"*. Do you know it came ***TRUE*** to the letter. His son did come to the throne, and within three months was ***OFF*** that throne and into ***EXILE***. And no other descendant of Jehoiakim was ever on the throne of David again.

Oh, if you fight against God's Word, ***YOU*** are the only one who ***SUFFERS***. If you are hurt by It... if It's saying you're in the ***WRONG***---and you're in the ***WRONG*** because you are ***WRONG***---you may get rid of It, you may cut It out mentally, you may burn It up, and as soon as you get outside the church, forget what's said... but God will simply write ***SOME MORE***, and that *'some more'* may be pretty ***DEVASTATING***. You can't fight against the ***TRUTH***.

And so, it was ***REPEATED***---duplicated---again. Spare a thought for Baruch. We'll see in chapter 45 that he got fed up with this---writing out chapters one to 25, reading them twice in one day, having it burned, and sitting down the next morning to write it all out ***AGAIN***. Can you imagine His feelings? We will come to that when we read the other chapter in a moment. But ***FIRST***, let me tell you that ***THIS BOOK IS FEARED***, as it was then. ***GOD'S WORD*** written is ***FEARED*** by those whose policy is ***WRONG***. That's why it is so difficult to get this book into Russia and China. Some are going through now, but only some. Why are they so ***AFRAID*** of a ***BOOK***? I'll tell you. Because it shows ***THEIR POLICY IS WRONG***. It shows their policy toward Israel is wrong. So, they ***FEAR*** this ***BOOK***. But there was a day when even in ***THIS*** country, men were so afraid of this ***BOOK***, they burned it. If you've ever been to Smithfield Market where they butcher and sell meat wholesale, remember that you stand on the spot of the ***SMITHFIELD BONFIR***ES. On that spot, this ***BOOK*** was ***BURNED*** by the hundreds. And the ***MEN*** who were caught ***READING IT*** were ***BURNED WITH IT***.

Not far from the house where I lived in Buckinghamshire, before moving here, there is a stone ***MONUMENT***, 12 or 15 feet high, just outside Amersham, up on a hill in a field at the edge of a wood. And on that monument are the names of 21 men and women who were ***BURNED ALIVE*** on that spot, and their own children were made to light the bonfire. And they were burned alive for this crime: They were caught ***READING THIS BOOK*** in that little wood. And this is England I'm talking about now. And there was a time when, if people hadn't ***SMUGGLED*** Bibles into this country, the truth would not have got here. So, think of that when you think about those who smuggle it elsewhere. It was smuggled into Britain, wrapped up in cotton bales, and it came in through Kingsland in Norfolk; and then it was secretly spread. And you knew that if you were caught [\*LOSS OF RECORDING\*]

.... with bills to sell Bibles. And suddenly a bandit brandishing a couple of pistols met him on the road and said, "What have you got under that cover?" And he said, "*Books*". He said, "I don't believe you, take the cover off." And at pistol point, the culpitor had to empty the barrow of all the Bibles. Sure enough, there were ***NONE*** (valuables). And so, the bandit said, "Burn them. Burn them. Come on, light a fire." And he made him light a fire. Now he said, "Throw those ***BOOKS*** on the fire". He was so angry at getting no valuables. And the culpitor said, "Well yes, I'll burn them; but would you just let me read a little bit from each to you before I burn it?" And the bandit said, "All right then." And so, he read the 23rd Psalm. The bandit said, "I'll keep that book. That's a good one." And the next one... the next one he read the Beatitudes. So, what Billy Graham calls the 'Beautiful Attitudes'. And he said, "That sounds like a good book, I'll keep that one". And he went on like this, "I'll keep that one, I'll keep that one, I'll keep that one". And finally, he had all of them stacked up, not realizing they were the same book. And then he said, "Now I'll have your wheelbarrow as well". And he put the books in the wheelbarrow and off he went. Years later the culpitor went up into those same hills. And when he went, he found people clamoring for his bibles. He said, "You've heard about this book!" "Of course, we have." "Who have you heard about this book from?" "Well, from the preacher in the village." "Oh, I didn't know any missionaries were here." "No, there are not missionaries here." When he got into the village, there was the ***BANDIT***... with his ***CHURCH***!!

Yes, that's at happens to the Bible. Men may keep it on the shelf, they may never read it. They may read their financial times more avidly. They may read Time magazine... but time passes very ***QUICKLY***. They may watch the television news... but there's only one bit of news worth hearing. You'll find it in ***THIS BOOK***. Men try and destroy it, but they can't. And the purpose of this book is this. It is summed up in the word ***PERHAPS***... ***PERHAPS***. Jeremiah was told by God, *"****WRITE DOWN*** *in the book ALL that I have said through you,* ***PERHAPS*** *...* ***PERHAPS*** *if people get it in* ***WRITTEN*** *form, they will* ***TURN*** *from their evil way and be forgiven."* And that word ***'PERHAPS'*** comes twice in that chapter. ***PERHAPS*** the divine peradventure. ***PERHAPS***. And so, it proves. And so, I spend my time reading this book and teaching it to you and proclaiming it far and wide because there's a ***PERHAPS***; and so often that ***PERHAPS*** happens, and somebody ***LISTENS,*** and it makes them **WISE TO SALVATION**. They say, *"****NOW*** *I see what life's all about.* ***NOW*** *I know what's wrong with me.* ***NOW*** *I know why I'm not fulfilled.* ***NOW*** *I know why I don't have a sense of purpose.* ***NOW*** *I understand!"* And they turn and are forgiven. ***PERHAPS***. And this book is the great ‘***PERHAPS’***. And God in heaven said, *"Let's get my word written down.* ***PERHAPS*** *they will turn and be forgiven."* And that's what it's all about.

***God Helps Baruch Through a Personal Crisis***

Now let's finish off the study this morning by reading chapter 45, just five little verses.

The word that Jeremiah the prophet spoke to Baruch the son of Neriah, when he wrote these words in a book at the dictation of Jeremiah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah. *"Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel to you, oh* ***BARUCH****. You said, 'Woe is me. For the Lord has added sorrow to my pain. I am weary with my groaning, and I find no rest.'"* Thus, shall you say to him, *"Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, what I have built, I am* ***BREAKING DOWN****, and what I have planted, I am* ***PLUCKING UP****---that is the* ***WHOLE LAND****. And do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them* ***NOT****; for behold, I am bringing evil upon all flesh,'* says the Lord, *'but I will give you* ***YOUR LIFE*** *as a prize of war in all places to which you may go.'"*

A young man frustrated with high hopes and ideals realizes that he will get no higher than being a solicitor's clerk. And there are just ***TWO THINGS*** I want to say about him. His affliction and his ambition both were things that God had to deal with. ***FIRST*** of all, his ***AFFLICTION***. It was a twofold affliction. The ***DEPRESSION*** that came on him through having all of Jeremiah one to 25 in ***ONE GO***.

You found it heavy going at times, haven't you? Can you imagine writing all that out and the pressure of it on your soul, the ***DOOM*** and the ***GLOOM*** of it? That was his pain as he wrote. He thought, *"Oh no,* ***WHY*** *was I born in* ***THIS*** *people in* ***THIS*** *land at* ***THIS*** *time... why?"* It pained him. And then, having written all that out and being told that he would have to do it all ***AGAIN***---that's enough to discourage anyone.

 I think of a brilliant aircraft designer who was our church secretary in Charleson, St. Peter. And he designed Britain's biggest helicopter, the Fairey Rotodyne with two great rotors at either end---you probably remember it. And he came home and switched on his television from the news after working seven years on this project. And on the news, it said, "The government has scrapped the Fairey Rotodyne." And that was the end of seven years of the best years of his life... all ***WASTED***. You can get very discouraged, can't you, when your work is destroyed.

And Baruch had labored ***WORD BY WORD***. I don't know how long it took him. He couldn't have done it in a day, or even days. Day after day Jeremiah must have dictated it slowly word by word and then it's ***BURNED***. And Baruch couldn't take it. He was a ***YOUNG*** man. He was not as mature as Jeremiah. He said, *"Lord, why'd you have to add sorrow to my pain? It was painful to write it* ***ONCE****. The sorrow to write it* ***AGAIN****... I'm just weary. Why'd you give me no rest? I'm fed up with doing this."*

And so, God spoke to him, and God knew that behind this complaint lay ***AMBITION*** and that the ambition was to get on to have a career. And here's this young man... a man with ability. And he's been born at a time and in a place when there's no scope for a career, and the land is shrinking and is likely to disappear. And if Jeremiah is to believe he's got no future and this young man with ambition is complaining because he can't see any further, *"It's a dead end. Am I gonna finish up as Jeremiah's clerk for the rest of my life?"* And God said, *"Say this to him. Say, 'Baruch, I too have known what it is to have my work destroyed. I planted this land, now I'm* ***PLUCKING IT UP****. I built this land, now I'm* ***DESTROYING IT****, Baruch. I understand what it is to see your work* ***DESTROYED****.'"*

I'll never forget when I met my sister-in-law at Heathrow. She'd been in Angola for (for how many years?) six or seven years. And then in the Portuguese troubles out there, all the people in the churches had to ***FLEE*** into the bush. The churches were ***DESTROYED***. All their missionary work ***DISAPPEARED***. She came home and she came through the barrier at London Airport ***BLANK***... staring eyes... staring eyes... her work gone.

God says, *"I know how you feel Baruch. I know how you feel. This land of Israel... I* ***PLANTED*** *them there. I* ***BUILT*** *them up. Now they're* ***DESTROYED****."* Incidentally, you saw a couple from our previous church coming back from Kampala on the television this week---you know the girl who said, "We've been praying. Praise the Lord, we're out." Did you see that girl? Well, that husband is the son of the Mr. Kingston---Gordon Kingston who's preached in this pulpit. But to see your work go---and many missionaries in Uganda are going to see their work go. *"Baruch, I understand,"* says God. *"I'd* ***HOPED*** *my people Israel would be good. I* ***WANTED*** *them to stay forever. I* ***WANTED*** *them to live a wholly healthy life. And now I've got to* ***DESTROY*** *it all, because it's* ***GONE****. I* ***UNDERSTAND*** *Baruch, I'm* ***DISCOURAGED*** *too."*

Wasn't that a lovely word from God? How ***SYMPATHETIC***. And then God said*, "Now I've* ***COMFORTED*** *you. I have a* ***STRONG*** *word to say to you. It's ambition that's frustrated, isn't it Baruch? You want to do some great thing? You, you, you* ***WISH*** *that God had called you to be a prophet. You WISH that you had been a missionary. You* ***WISH*** *that you had been a minister. You* ***WISH*** *that you had been a preacher. Do you?? Seekest now* ***GREAT THINGS*** *for thyself, Baruch? Seek them* ***NOT****. In this world it's a blessing just to stay alive!!"*

That was God's word for Baruch. It's the word for ***EVERY*** ambitious man. *“Your frustrated because you haven't got as far as you wished you had.”* Then God says, *"Seek great things for yourself?* ***DON'T****! Just thank God you're* ***ALIVE****. That's the biggest blessing. And in all the evil that I'm bringing on all flesh as God, I will give you your life as a reward for being a faithful secretary."* And the fact is that when the Babylonians finally overran Jerusalem and the temple was burnt to the ground and the people were taken away in chains, there were ***TWO PEOPLE*** who were left free---***JEREMIAH*** and ***BARUCH***. They both died of old age down in Egypt. And God says, *"I will give you your life in whatever country you go to."* And they both died in old age, peacefully in ***EGYPT***. *"Seek great things for yourself? Don't! Just count it the greatest blessing of God to be* ***ALIVE****... for life is to be alive---not to achieve, but to be* ***ALIVE*** *in God's world, and to be* ***FAITHFUL****...even if that job be humdrum.”*

I'm going to ask three members of this church to come into the pulpit right now. And I'm going to introduce them to you because their task is the task of Baruch. Going to ask David Ash if he's here and David Sprat and Peter Traggir, would you come and join me?

***Interview: 3 Members of Church*** (9 Minutes)