

Kings and Prophets 16-05-19

This is Thursday, the 19th of May, 2016. We continue our study of kings and prophets. We're looking at the days of King Josiah, and having looked at the king, having looked at the circumstances, having looked at the untimely demise despite the promise of God in some detail over the last couple of weeks, we are now going to turn our attention to the major prophet functioning at this time, appointed by God, provided by God to the southern kingdom of Judah, the prophet Jeremiah.

Let's take a moment as we prepare to look at this great book to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and our study this evening. Father, we're grateful for this time of opportunity as we come to the portion of Your Word that deals with this time in Judah, which so closely parallels our own, culturally, spiritually. We thank You for its pertinence.

We thank You for its encouragement, as well as its alert and its warning value. And we pray that as we look at it together that not only will we understand clearly its purpose and the truth that it contains, but also the application that we should make, the way forward for us as we live in these perilous times, that we can accomplish the goal for which You have placed us in this place and in this time, that our souls will be fortified, that we will be nurtured and guided by Your Holy Spirit, and will reflect the presence and power of the Lord Jesus as His body in a way that pleases You, that testifies to the reality and the meaning of salvation, that broadcasts hope in a way that will attract others to the saving grace that You have expressed in Your Son, the Lord Jesus. We pray it in His name.

Amen. We saw that Josiah came to the throne at the age of eight, and in his early going, he saw the spiritual apostasy in some quarters, malaise and apathy in other quarters, and most of all, the neglect of the central symbol of God's presence in Judah, which was the temple. And he saw to it that it was restored, refurbished, that funding was provided, that faithful men oversaw the work, and it was a tremendous incentive and created a tremendous opportunity for people in the land to return to the God of their fathers, the God of the covenant, the God of their nation.

As goes the nation in the Old Testament, so goes the soul of the believer in the new, and also in an echo fashion, in a parallel and similar fashion, we look at the church, the collection or grouping of believers that form the body of Christ in this dispensation, and there are applications as well in God's dealing with His people Israel in the Old Testament with His people, the church, corporately in the new. So we not only recognize and try to make application first and foremost within our own domicile, within our own temple of the Holy Spirit and temple of God in our souls, but we also recognize that these things are pertinent, particularly as they reflect trends and patterns of behavior, typicalities and characteristics in the larger collection of saints abroad and alive at this time. And the reason I mention that is I think we can safely say that we are not apostate.

You wouldn't have cleared your schedule on a Thursday night to take part in and participate in

and contribute to this Bible study if you were a idol-worshipping, mouse-eating, swine-loving, grave-visiting apostate such as we see in the Garden of Uzzah right next door to the temple. So it becomes a question of pertinence. We don't want to camp on a safe outcropping of rock and say, well, that's certainly not me, even though it certainly isn't us in that sense.

Where it does instruct us, inform us, and enlighten us is what did faithful believers in that generation do as they saw the disintegration of covenant relationship with God and the worship of God in their culture and in the city of Jerusalem and in the kingdom of Judea. Because you always have that remnant in Israel. I have preserved to myself 7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal.

Well, we like to think we are of the 7,000. We want to do some close and careful gut checks to make sure that we're not fooling ourselves or deceiving ourselves. The heart is deceitful.

Our prophet tonight, Jeremiah, famously reminds us of this in chapter 17, verse 9. Our tendency is to give ourselves a high grade when we grade our own paper. This is why when I was a youngster, they always made you exchange papers. Exchange papers with the person behind you, with the person across from you in the wooden desks of that day with the number two pencils of that day and the paper tests of that day.

I feel like such an antique and such a fossil now thinking back to when I went to school because school is nothing like what some of us went to. But when there weren't computers grading your tests or delinquent teachers who let them lay fallow for weeks on end and by the time you do get your grade back you can't even remember what was on the test, it becomes largely useless. I am shocked and dismayed at the tragic state of education as I have observed it through my immediate family going through it in the secular establishment.

And I blame it all on the driving of God out of the classroom. When you drive God out, righteousness and justice go with it, with Him. And I attribute a large amount of the extreme, extreme loss of quality in all levels of education to the much-touted absence of God in the classroom.

There's a famous quote, you can look it up, I was reading it in another context just earlier today, but Jeffrey Dahmer, the serial killer and cannibal, famously said, you know, if you don't believe in a God and in a judgment, what's the incentive to keep your behavior within acceptable limits? And he said, I didn't think there was any and hence my career as a cannibalistic serial killer. I didn't believe there was a God. I bought evolution hook, line and sinker.

This is what he says. And what's to stop you from doing just whatever you want and justifying it whatever way you want? Cut loose completely from any absolute moorings. Well, this is what is happening in Judah.

And this is the situation when God calls one of the most notable, memorable, faithful and reluctant prophets in the whole Old Testament. And that is the prophet Jeremiah. Turn with me,

if you will, to Jeremiah chapter 1, verse 1. Now this is a big book.

If you keep your place there at chapter 1 and start looking for the end of Jeremiah, which would also be the beginning of Lamentations, you see that we've got 52 chapters. So if you wanted to read Jeremiah and really absorb it, you could do one chapter a week and be done in a year. Fifty-two chapters.

In our Kings and Prophets study, we have sampled, we have gotten a broad stroke look at the prophets, even the short minor prophets that we have surveyed. But we cannot do a verse-by-verse, we cannot do a detailed study of Jeremiah in this particular context or we literally will have to finish in glory. Because I won't live long enough, nor will you, to finish it.

So we're going to do the best we can to get the tone, the overall content and the purpose for which God sent Jeremiah at this time. Here's the thing. If the situation, as I have alleged, is very similar in this time in Judah to what it is for us right now, wouldn't it be great if God raised up the equivalent of an Old Testament prophet with what at the Naval Academy they called the gouge, the straight scoop, the absolute, this is the word from on high, straight from God's lips to your ears, here's what you need to know.

Well, guess what? Jeremiah is that guy. The reason the book of Jeremiah is in the Bible, as far as we are concerned, is for us at this time to help us understand what's going on and what's the plan. I don't know about you, but I like that.

That appeals to me. I don't like wandering around bumping into things in the dark. That's why among the many things my phone can do, it's one of the most expensive flashlights that I own.

I can tap a couple of places on my screen and suddenly my phone is a flashlight. What a great thing. It's a \$300 flashlight.

It reminds me of when computers used to cost \$1,500 and people made them into a deck of cards to play solitaire. But this is the purpose, as far as we are concerned, for the existence of the prophet Jeremiah. It isn't so much to know what went on 2,500 odd years ago, 2,600 years ago, 2,700 years ago.

What is the purpose for us? It is to shine a light on our path. How should we then live? What does God expect of me, a faithful believer? Double-check to be sure that that's the case, but we're going to assume for the sake of argument that we are faithful, diligent, motivated, mission-oriented believers. We're on task and on mission.

We adapt, improvise, and overcome here. So what are we supposed to do? What are we supposed to do? Jeremiah is telling us in these 52 chapters. So we want to get the structure of that.

We want to get the five-paragraph order out of that and ensure that we are doing it. That's why it's here. Chapter 1 of Jeremiah gives us the call of the prophet.

The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin. Notice, where do the priests usually hang out? If you were a priest and you didn't want to have a long commute, where would you live? In Jerusalem, maybe a short commute to Jericho, but you want to be somewhere close, right? If I was going to cover myself with the glory of the priesthood, I would say, I am a priest from Jerusalem. I'm a priest from very near Jerusalem.

But there is apparently a separate set of priests in Anathoth. And Jeremiah is the son of Hilkiah of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin. They have separated themselves.

They're apart. If you look on a map, and I don't know if you have a map in your Bible that will show where Anathoth is, but you remember where Benjamin is, first of all. In the southern kingdom, you've got actually two tribes.

The ten northern tribes, then you have Judah and Benjamin, right? Well, this is at a distance north and east of Jerusalem. It is east and a little bit south of Gibeah. Now, what this tells us, among other things, is that you can be a priest without being in the group of priests who are perpetuating and consciencing being a part of the corruption that is taking place in the temple at Jerusalem.

These guys have said, we're called a priest, we are sons of Aaron. Do you remember how many sons Aaron had? He had four, but he ended up with two. He had a little strange fire incident, guys being carried away by the edges of their cloaks, and so the two younger sons of Aaron became the priestly functionaries.

So Hilkiah is a descendant of that long line of sons of Aaron, and Jeremiah is his son in the land of Benjamin, to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah, the son of Ammon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. Josiah was how old when he became king? Eight. So how old is he when Jeremiah begins his ministry? Eight plus thirteen is? Twenty-one-ish.

Remember our genealogy study, there can be months in there, so twenty-one, twenty-two, somewhere in there. But he's in his early twenties. How long does Josiah reign in total? He's going to die when he's thirty-one.

So if you go back to 2 Kings, I think the totality of his reign is eighteen years. But he's going to live another ten years, if my memory serves, and I will check it in our passage in 2 Kings, when you get to chapter twenty-two. Josiah was eight years old when he became king, he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem, so he's thirty-nine when he checks out.

He reigns thirty-one years, he was eight, so he dies when he's thirty-nine. So Jeremiah begins ministering when he is twenty-one. I was pretty sure my math was off.

So how many years does he have the benefit of Jeremiah's prophetic ministry? Twenty-one to thirty-nine, right? So eighteen years, seventeen, eighteen years, somewhere in that area. Quite a long time, nearly half his life, right? So he begins, Jeremiah does, in the thirteenth year of his

reign. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.

So Jeremiah takes us from the heady days of reform and rebuilding and peace and prosperity and expansion of the southern kingdom under Josiah, all the way to its destruction. So this sounds like useful information to me, for us. Now, Jeremiah is a collection.

It isn't a chronological, it kind of reminds me of Ezekiel, where you've got these things collected more perhaps thematically than chronologically. And it is a reminder, let me just say at the outset, we say, well, why didn't this stuff get put down by Baruch or whoever put the final form of the book together? Baruch, of course, is Jeremiah's scribe and friend who writes down the prophecies of Jeremiah, organizes them, has to rewrite a bunch of them when they get burned in the fire by the king. But why didn't he put it in chronological order? It seems to me like that would be appealing.

I wondered why Ezekiel didn't do the same thing, just add to the end of the scroll when you get a new prophecy, put it in there and we'll just track all the way through. This is your western mind talking. This is your modern day American educated technology mind saying, it needs to be the way I'm used to it.

I like my stories in chronological order. I like to follow it sequentially because that's how I'm built. That's not the way people in the Old Testament day were built.

It's not the way they thought. This reminds me, this is one of the few times you will ever hear me ask for a show of hands. How many of you all have ever taken the Evelyn Wood speed reading course? Anybody? One of the things in the Evelyn Wood course beyond here's how to read faster, at least when I took it, they also included here's how to take notes.

Here's how to organize information in an effective way because Evelyn Wood is about not only gathering information from text quickly, but retaining it, which I thought was laudable. It's a good thing. You don't want to read 100 miles an hour.

What did you read? Well, I don't remember. I read it really fast, but I don't know what it was about. You want to retain it.

What I distinctly recall about their suggested method was you organize things not in the sequence that you read them, but in clusters. Even when you take notes, you write a thing, and then anything that pertains to it, you stick it nearby. You remember that? It's like a little spoke diagram because a character might be introduced if you're reading fiction or even nonfiction.

And as the story unfolds, you get new information about that person. So you might get their age and what they look like at the beginning or that they wear ray bands and dock sides and so on at the beginning. And then later on you find out that they've got kinfolks or this is their job, this is where they live, this is, oh, they're actually a serial killer.

Whatever it may be, you put that information in that little cluster and you revisit that cluster. Other memory techniques that people will suggest to you include using your house, something you're familiar with, like your home, as a memory map. Think about where you live.

Think about each of the rooms. You've probably got a living room. You've got a kitchen.

You've got X number of bedrooms. You may have a den or something like that. And if you want to remember a collection of items, you visualize putting them in those rooms.

You've got a grocery list. You say, I'm going to go to the store, and the family needs these six items. They need bread, eggs, bacon, cheese, milk, and coffee.

Well, you take those items and you put the bread and the cheese, like a grilled cheese sandwich, in the living room. You put the bacon and the eggs in the kitchen, like a breakfast. You put the coffee and the milk in the den.

They both are drinkable, and so on. And later on, when you get to the store, you say, now what were those things I was supposed to get? Well, you walk back through the house and you look in the living room, and there's a grilled cheese sandwich. Oh, yeah, cheese and bread.

You walk into the kitchen, there's the bacon and eggs. You walk into the den, oh, there's the drinkables. There's the milk and the coffee.

See what I mean? It's a memory map. Now, I've given you that to such an extent that I expect, if you think about it at all, even after class is over, if you think back and say, what was that memory map he gave? You will remember the two things that were in those three rooms. It's a technique.

Why am I elaborating this? This is the way ancient Near Eastern people thought. They didn't have papers and pencils. They didn't have phones.

They didn't have the kind of written materials that we use to make a grocery list. They kept it in their heads, and they organized material thematically. When it was written down, when it was delivered as a prophetic oracle, it was delivered orally, thematically, clustered around ideas, connected in ways that we're not used to.

We tend to try to connect things chronologically. We tend to connect things technologically. We tend to connect things in some technical manner in our Western post-modern civilization.

They did it a different way. That's why the book of Jeremiah is organized the way it is. That's why the book of Ezekiel is organized the way it is.

That's why the Proverbs look like a completely random collection of abstract, throw wisdom in a blender, pour it out onto a griddle, and here's the book of Proverbs. If you study it carefully, it is thematic, and it moves logically and memorably from one section to another. Some sections are short, some are long, but it is thematic.

That's the way it is in Jeremiah. Jeremiah starts out in the days of Josiah, but some of the material is from the later days of Jehoiakim and from Zedekiah. He begins in chapter 1. You know now three things about Jeremiah.

You know who the author is. You know what his career occupation is. You know when he began to prophesy.

That's what you know about him. Now what do you know about the book? The book is going to be organized thematically. Good so far? Chapter 1. He's what many people in Jerusalem would call a renegade priest.

He's a fundamentalist priest. He's dangerous because he's clinging to the old values. Right? He's stuck in the mud of the past, i.e., he is faithful to the word of God.

So he's elsewhere. This is going to be a demanding task. He is going to deliver the word of the Lord to people who don't want to hear it.

From the top to the bottom. Now, Josiah, when he gets started, there's probably going to be a sympathetic ear. Josiah is a good king.

He's rebuilding the temple. You can imagine that these priests that have been segregated out in Anathoth are thinking, at last, recovery, revival, renewal, renaissance, revivification. We're getting back.

This is what we've been waiting for. And they look at Josiah and hope swells in their hearts. And it's going to last a while.

Jeremiah begins in his 21st year. And for the next nearly two decades, things are on an upswing. Things are looking good.

There's peace. There's expansion. There's building.

There's sort of a vacuum into which the economy expands. And despite the removal of the idols and the doing away with a lot of these overt and obvious idolatrous practices on the part of Josiah, the other thing that Jeremiah begins to observe is that you cannot legislate morality. You cannot legislate spirituality.

You cannot impose from the outside what does not exist on the inside. You can get conformity, but you cannot get agreement. I say again, you can get conformity, but you cannot create agreement by pressure from the outside.

People will conform, but they don't agree. Have you ever had a job where you had to follow a policy that you absolutely didn't like, but it's the policy? I don't agree with it. If I was in charge, I would change it.

In fact, if I was in charge, you cannot believe what a heavenly paradise and millennial utopia

this would be if I were in charge. I can see exactly how it ought to be, but it's not. And I conform because I am authority oriented.

I recognize I am not the boss. If God wanted me to be the boss, he'd make me the boss. And for some reason known only to him, I am not the boss.

So I must conform, but I do not agree. Right? Well, Jeremiah observes, and we'll see it in the text, that although Josiah has achieved a superficial reform, and he himself is dedicated and has a heartfelt desire for recovery and renewal, he's leading a charge that very few are actually following. They're all saying, go Josiah, way to go king, but their heart is not in it.

And at the first disappearance of his royal authority, they're going to revert, and they are going to resort back to what they really think. This is, you know, the classroom of juvenile delinquents. As long as the teacher is in the room, especially with some resort to violence, they will obey.

Teacher steps out of the room, chaos. People will obey the law. When there's law enforcement present, law enforcement leaves, chaos breaks out.

It is a superficial conformity without agreement. So these are difficult times. In these days, Josiah is going to make a colossal mistake and get himself killed.

His son, keep your finger here at Jeremiah, and go back again to 2 Kings. We've seen this in very short form in 2 Kings 22-23. Josiah restores the temple.

Then in verse 28 of 2 Kings 23. 2 Kings 23-28. The rest of the acts of Josiah, all that he did are written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah.

And we saw the Chronicles account. In his days, Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt, went to the aid of the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. King Josiah went against him.

No consultation, no resort to the Lord. He has a wonderful domestic program going, but he makes a catastrophically bad decision with regard to foreign policy. And Pharaoh Necho killed him at Megiddo when he confronted him.

Megiddo of Armageddon fame. His servants moved his body in a chariot from Megiddo, brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own tomb. The people of the land took Jehoahaz, the son of Josiah, anointed him, and made him king in his father's place.

The people of the land took Jehoaz. You know, you always have a little bit more confidence when God sends a prophet like Jeremiah with a horn of anointing oil and designates who should be on the throne. Does it say, and behold, Jeremiah went and anointed any one of the sons of Josiah to be king? It does not.

What's in the hearts of the people? Let's find God's man or let's find our man. This tells you how superficial the revival was. Jehoahaz was 23 years old when he became king and he reigned three months.

Smart move on the part of the people. Good choice. He lasts 90 days.

You've heard about a 90-day wonder? Well, in this context, the 90-day wonder is the incredibly brief career of Jehoahaz. I would be ashamed to put this on my resume. Oh, yeah.

I was the king of Judah for three months. He did evil in the sight of the Lord according to all that his fathers had done. Now, why did the people take him and make him king? Do you think they didn't know him? He did evil according to all that his fathers had done.

Fathers meaning before Josiah, right? Like Manasseh. So Pharaoh Necho put him in prison at Riblah in the land of Hamath that he might not reign in Jerusalem. The guy is so bad that the Egyptian pharaoh can't stand him.

Now, this is below whatever lies at the bottom of the ocean beneath the whales. This is so low. Are you kidding me? The pharaoh of Egypt thinks you're too rotten to rule? You're too bad to leave on the throne? And by the way, what has happened to the independence and the glory and the prosperity and the wonderful happy days are here again at times of Josiah when Pharaoh Necho decides who is on the throne? First, it's the people putting on a king.

Now, it's the pharaoh of Egypt putting somebody on the throne. Within the space of three months, the southern kingdom of Judah has lost all control over their government. In 90 days, they are now controlled by an outside power.

How long did Josiah rule and control the government there? From the age of eight until 39, right? He reigns 31 years. And in 90 days, three times 30, they're controlled by the outside. So Pharaoh Necho put Eliakim, the son of Josiah, king, in place of his father Josiah and changed his name to Jehoiakim.

That's Jeremiah's second noted king. He skips over the 90-day wonder and he says, I prophesied in the days of Josiah. I prophesied in the days of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah.

So Jehoiakim, in verse 35 of 2 Kings 23, gives silver and gold to Pharaoh and taxed the land to give money according to the command of Pharaoh. He exacted silver and gold from the people of the land, from everyone according to his assessment, to give it to Pharaoh Necho. In verse 35, how many times do you have the Pharaoh mentioned? Three times? Three times.

I mean, did we get this message the first time? The people are being soaked by Pharaoh Necho. They're being taxed by their own king and the money is being given to the king of a foreign country. Jehoiakim was 25 years old when he became king and he reigned 11 years in Jerusalem.

Gives his mother's name there. He did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done. Now, it's kind of a bad thing when you are a good king and you raise bad sons.

Remember it said about Josiah that nobody had been like David the way he was until he came along. How is he also like David? His sons are rotten to the core. One of them lasts 90 days and gets incarcerated.

The next one reigns 11 years. But both of them do evil in the sight of the Lord. Notice in chapter 24 of 2 Kings, In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years.

He turned and rebelled against him. The Lord sent against him raiding bands of Chaldeans, Syrians, Moabites, Ammonites, sent them against Judah to destroy it according to the word of the Lord which he had spoken by his servants, the prophets. One of the reasons Nebuchadnezzar had the success that he did in conquering the southern kingdom and his three successive raids is that they were weakened.

What little strength they had left over from Josiah was taken away by these semi-domestic raids. The Moabites, the Ammonites, the Syrians come in and chip away and whittle away and drain the resources of their border security so that there is so little left by way of resistance that when Nebuchadnezzar comes he just runs them over. Verse 3, chapter 24, 2 Kings, Surely at the commandment of the Lord this came upon Judah to remove them from his sight because of the sins of Manasseh according to all that he had done.

That was the last straw. And because of the innocent blood that he had shed for he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood which the Lord would not pardon. Remember he caused his own sons to pass through the fire to Molech.

The rest of the acts of Jehoiakim and all that he did are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah? Jehoiakim rested with his fathers. Then Jehoiachin his son reigned in his place. The king of Egypt did not come out of his land anymore for the king of Babylon had taken all that belonged to the king of Egypt from the brook of Egypt to the river Euphrates.

So Egypt lasts long enough to take over the government of the southern kingdom until its own government is taken over by the Babylonians, by Nebuchadnezzar. And so there is sort of a temporary scourge. Remember in the days of the northern kingdom when God used the, as the Bible says, the bitter and hasty Assyrian to be the rod of his anger and the staff of his indignation? But then the Assyrians are diminished and removed? Well, that's what happens here.

Egypt becomes the rod and the staff and now it is removed by Nebuchadnezzar. And we know what's going to happen in the days of Nebuchadnezzar because of the book of Daniel. And Nebuchadnezzar is going to come to recognize there is one true God through the testimony of Daniel and of Hananiah and Mishaiah and Azariah.

But you can see as you continue through chapter 24 of 2 Kings that Jehoiachin is 18 years old

and when he becomes king he is going to reign three months. Sort of a little bracket here, three months, 11 years, and three months. He did evil in the sight of the Lord according to all that his father had done.

At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem and the city was besieged. 2 Kings 24.11 Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city as his servants were besieging it. Jehoiachin king of Judah, his mother, his servants, his princes and his officers went out to the king of Babylon and the king of Babylon in the eighth year of his reign took him prisoner.

He carried out from there all the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king's house and he cut in pieces all the articles of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the Lord as the Lord had said. And it just goes downhill from there. So in chapter 1 of Jeremiah, Jeremiah says these are difficult times.

Jeremiah has doubts. Look at Jeremiah chapter 1 very quickly. The word of the Lord came to me saying before I formed you in the womb I knew you.

Before you were born I sanctified you. I ordained you a prophet to the nations. God raised up Jeremiah.

God placed him at this particular place and this particular time. Application. God has placed you at this particular place and this particular time.

It's no accident that you are where you are. God's omniscience doesn't only extend to the major prophets. It extends to every single one of his people.

You being one of his people, he designated you to be body of Christ. He designated you to live at this time in this place for unique and specific purposes. So what does Jeremiah say to this? Verse 6, I said, ah, Lord God.

And some people that's as far as they get. I cannot speak. I'm a youth.

The Lord said to me, do not say I am a youth. You shall go to all whom I send you. Now youth here is his specific perceived handicap.

He looks at himself and he says, the problem with me is I'm too young. People say, well, I'm too limited in whatever way. I'm limited by this limitation or that limitation or this handicap or that handicap.

I can't, I can't, I can't. It doesn't have to be youth. It can be old age.

You can say, well, I'm too old. If you are alive, God has a purpose. Young, old, in between.

Limited, not limited. Married, unmarried. Student, teacher, business, career, family.

Doesn't matter. All of us have areas where we think, well, I'm, when it comes to the exercise of my spiritual gift, I'm hemmed in. And keep in mind now, why is it that Jeremiah feels limited by his youth? Does he say, I can't get a job because I'm young? I can't do some secular accomplishment because I'm young.

This is specifically related to spiritual function. He says, I can't function as a prophet because I'm too young. So the application for us isn't just, well, I can't get to where I want to go because of my limitation.

Hear me carefully now. Listen to what the word of God is saying to all of us. We tend to say, I cannot perform my spiritual responsibility because of some perceived limitation.

Paul prayed that there was a thorn in the flesh that was limiting him as an apostle. God said, my grace is sufficient. I'm not taking the thorn away.

You need that thorn. If you didn't need it, I wouldn't give it to you. Jeremiah needed his youth.

Why? Well, look at verse two and three. He's got to prophesy for a long time. He's got to last through several kings and into the captivity.

He's got to start young or he's not going to survive long enough to do all of God's will. Same thing with Daniel. Daniel had to start young because Daniel is going to last a long, long time.

What seems to be a limitation at the beginning turns out to be an asset at the end. Good thing I started young because look how old I am. If I'd known I was going to last this long, I wouldn't have been so worried about my limitation.

You thought I was going to say something else. Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. O Lord, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.

But the Lord said to me, do not say I am a youth. Don't give me your limitations, God says. I'm not interested.

Did you hear what I said at the beginning? I knew you before I formed you. I assigned you this function and I built you the way you're built and I started you when you started because I'm God and I know what I'm doing. Who are you, thing formed, to answer back to God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, why have you made me thus? It's pretty silly.

It's just part of our faith is that God knows what He's doing. Whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.

Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth. What does this remind you of? One of our other great major prophets? O Lord, I'm a man of unclean lips. And what happened? God sends one of the seraphim with a coal from the stones of fire surrounding God's throne and sanctifies His lips.

God has got what it takes to overcome whatever limitations we think we have. That's the point. I have set this day, set you over the nations and over kingdoms, plural.

Not just this kingdom. You think you're going to have trouble in the southern kingdom of Judah because you're young? I have touched your lips and you're going to prophesy over a lot more than just this little kingdom of Judah. I have set you over kingdoms and over nations to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant.

Now can you imagine Jeremiah, this young man, hearing God say, I'm giving you pronouncement authority over kingdoms. Now what other kingdoms are there? Egypt, Ammon, Moab, Assyria, Babylon. And Jeremiah is called of God to pull these things down, to root them out.

I have set you over them. Now, what kingdoms do we face? Where is our opposition? We have local opposition like the Moabites and the Ammonites. We've got believers within our own tent, perverting, distorting, undermining, corrupting the word of God, leavening it with the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod.

And we've got the formal opposition of atheism and secularism and humanism and materialism. We've got the whole educational system of our country actively working against us. We've got people in the government actively working against us.

We've got people in the community. We've got people with agendas. We've got people with perversion agendas.

We've got people with political agendas. We've got people with economic agendas. We've got people on every side.

We're hemmed in on every side by these kingdoms. And what does God say? I have set you over them. What is the power that Jeremiah has over these kingdoms? Does God give him a Thor's hammer? Does he give him a piece of lightning he can hurl? Does he call down fire from heaven? What is Jeremiah's authority? How does Jeremiah prevail and exercise this position over the kingdoms? What is the specific means by which he is going to pull them down and root them out? What is it? It is the Word of God.

Jeremiah is going to deliver the Word of God. The Word of God pulls down kingdoms. The Word of God roots up kingdoms.

Big kingdoms with big armies. With economic power. With population power.

With political power. Just like the enemies that face us. So are we looking for a bug-out strategy? Are we looking for a hunker-down strategy? Are we looking for a safety net for our possessions or our physical safety? What is it we're looking for? May I suggest to you that a great starting place is what God tells Jeremiah.

Whatever I command you, you shall speak. You are going to represent the message of the Lord. You are going to communicate the Word of the Lord.

That's your power. That's your identity. That's your strength.

Your strength is the strength of the Word of God. To the extent that you reflect it. To the extent that you live it.

To the extent that you communicate it. To the extent that you embody it. What's the first thing John says about the Lord Jesus Christ in his gospel? Who is Jesus? He's the Word.

Who's the body of Christ now? You and me. What are we supposed to embody and represent and communicate in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation? The Word. Know it.

Understand it. Defend it. Live it.

That's the power to uproot and pull down kingdoms as big as Egypt. As big as Babylon. As big as Moab and Ammon.

Root them up. Pull them down. It's the Word of God in the hands of the Holy Spirit of God.

Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord. It's the Spirit of God and the Word of God. Now I ask you, you name any opposition, anything in the world today that you look at as a problem.

Well, I've got people problems. I've got agenda problems. I've got rampant extremist religious fanatic problems.

I've got economic problems, political problems. You name it, whatever it is. Now I ask you, has that particular faction, that particular kingdom, got the power to overcome the Word of God and the Spirit of God? No.

They don't. So where is your refuge? He who dwells in the shadow, secret place of the Most High, abiding in the shadow of the Almighty? What is that secret place? What is that shadow? It is the Word of God and the Spirit of God. You have it.

That's why you're here. Right? If God be for us, who can be against us? Why should I fear what man can do unto me? God has promised, I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. His righteousness is expressed in His Word.

His righteousness is implemented by His Spirit. All I have to do, I don't have to worry about how to solve all of these problems and oppose all of these kingdoms. All I have to do is keep myself in the center of God's will.

Why is God going to withdraw His presence and His protective power from the temple that

bears His name and the city in which that temple resides? How is that all going to fall and go away? What did they do? They abandoned the Word of God. Consciously overthrew it. Set it aside.

Did their own thing. It is our daily, hourly prioritizing. What am I doing? And why am I doing it? How does the light of the Word of God shine on my thoughts and my actions? The thoughts and intents of my heart.

All we have to do to survive, to prevail, to overcome, to be overcomers. Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. I don't have to figure out how to beat militant Islam.

I don't have to figure out how to survive the coming economic crash. I don't have to figure out how to survive the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune in whatever field it may be. God already has that figured out.

What I need to do is be in the place where God's Word will communicate those answers to me. A receptive heart. A humble spirit.

What does the Lord require of you, O man, but to do what? Pursue justice. Love mercy. Walk humbly with your God.

How do you walk humbly with God? Word of God. Spirit of God. It is not up high.

We don't have to climb to heaven to get it. We don't have to dig a hole and go down to Hades. It is near.

It is in our hearts and on our lips. It is the Word of God and the Spirit of God. You want answers? You want fortification? You want the full armor of God? Sword of the Spirit.

Shield of faith. Primary implements of defense and attack. That's what God gives Jeremiah right at the beginning.

We have 51 chapters to go, but the key is in this first half chapter. Ah, Lord, I've got problems. God says, you don't have problems.

I am on your side, and you've got my Word. And with it, you are going to uproot and pull down kingdoms. Not one or two little recalcitrant priests that come after you and try to banish you from Jerusalem.

You're going to pull down and uproot the biggest things on the landscape by the Word of God. Remember it. Think about it.

Figure out its pertinence in our lives. That's our challenge. That's our call.

Let's close here for tonight. We'll continue in the book of Jeremiah next time. Father, thank You

for Your Word.

Thank You for our position of wonderful privilege, wonderful opportunity. There is nothing that can touch us. There is nothing that can harm us.

There is nothing that can reach us. We are safe in Your hands. We are safe in Your arms.

We are safe in the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You for Him. We thank You for this tremendous position that we occupy, fueled by Your Word, indwelt and filled with Your Spirit, given the opportunity to represent the Lord Jesus Christ and to do as He did, to prevail in every circumstance through Your presence and Your power as we find it resident in our souls, in Your Word and in Your Spirit.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will remind us of who we are, remind us of the victory we have in Christ, and give us the Spirit not of fear but of power and of love and of a sound mind so that we can go forth in a way that represents the Lord Jesus and that brings glory to Your name, calls others to You, asking us a reason for the hope that we have because of these wonderful truths. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.