

Kings and Prophets 16-08-11a

This is Thursday, the 11th of August, 2016. We continue our study in the book of Jeremiah as a part of our larger series on Kings and Prophets. We're summarizing the book, looking at some of its central themes.

We began last time looking at 27 points in the first 30 chapters, and we'll resume where we left off with that. Not that 27 points are all that interesting, but what is in the 27 points is very interesting, very compelling, very useful to us. So as we pick this up, be watching for the content.

There is a golden thread that runs through these passages. It is the theme, it is the message, it is the emphasis of the prophet Jeremiah to people living in a time much like ours, nationally, culturally, spiritually. And what he has to say by way of a message for them is valuable and essential for our own information and our own motivation and guidance as we seek to live our lives to please the Lord.

So we'll take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer, and then we'll do a super quick, lightning quick, if you blink you'll miss it, review, and then we'll pick up where we left off. Shall we pray? Father, we are thankful for your watch care and your guidance in our lives, your provision, your protection, and in some cases your sense of humor in being our Father and watching over us and arranging the details of our lives in such a way that your plan is accomplished and we are given opportunities to grow in grace, in knowledge, and to mature, to become fruitful and productive in your service and in your family. We thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you that through Him and because of Him and following His example, we can be related to you in an ever more personal way and come to understand your character, your grace, and reflect it in our own lives and toward others. We pray that as we continue this study in the book of Jeremiah that your Holy Spirit will be our teacher, shine a light on those truths that are pertinent for each one of us so that we can lay hold of them and make use of them in the time that remains to us in this life. We pray it in Jesus' name, amen.

If you remember, and I hope you remember, if not, it might be in your notes. It's in my notes. If you remember, I have two pages here.

Do you remember what the headings are on these pages? These points, these things that we're following sort of episodically through fall into two headings. They both start with a C. That's the clue. So one part of it, let's talk about the positive part first.

It starts with a C. That half is commands for whom? Commands for the faithful. That's us. That's we.

That's you and me. We are the faithful, right? The other half starts with a C. What are they labeled? Consequences for the faithless. Commands for the faithful.

Consequences for the faithless. Now, as we go through these details, it's very interesting, and there are specifics in there that were pertinent then. They're pertinent now.

But if you look at those two headings, what is the essential thing to start with? Where's the starting point? I want to make sure I'm on list number one, right? So if there's any doubt, that's the starting place. I want to not have to worry about the consequences to the faithless. And faithless, we sound like, well, that crowd over yonder, that person, those people, they're the faithless.

I want to examine myself to see what? Examine yourselves to see if you are in the faith. In the faith, commands. Out of the faith, consequences.

So before we review the list, we want to be sure we're on the positive side. It's a choice. There's no reason for any believer to not be on the faithful list.

How hard is it? Is it hard? Does it take guts? Does it take tenacity? Does it take money? Does it take talent? Does it take IQ? Does it take some lightning bolt from above? What does it take to be faithful? Nothing but choice. It is no more difficult to be faithful than it is to be faithless. If it required something of us, that would start sorting people in an unfair way, wouldn't it? Well, my genes aren't as good as yours, whichever way you spell it.

My income's not as good. My circumstances, I don't have as much time. I don't have as much mental grip.

If it required any of those things to be faithful, God wouldn't be fair, because we are all as various as snowflakes when it comes to the combination of factors that make up our circumstance. So guess what? Faithful, faithless, it's a choice. Dictated by nothing but you.

This is imago Dei. This is image of God. Science will tell you, no, no, no.

It's a mechanical universe, and if you go left and somebody else goes right, there are pre-existing causes. It's chemical. Some molecule formed some many milliseconds after the Big Bang, and that's what made you make your choice.

Butterfly flaps its wings in China. You decide pork chops for dinner. This is the mechanistic universe idea.

God says, no. You are made in the image of God. In the image of God made he him.

Male and female made he them. In the image of God. You know what God can do? Whatever he wants.

He chooses to be righteous. He chooses to remain righteous. He chooses to be faithful.

He chooses to be compassionate and merciful. He chose to send his son to die for us. He did not have to.

He was not compelled. There wasn't some preternatural nine-dimensional Big Bang somewhere that gave birth to God, and he had no choice but to do what he did. Free agency.

It's mysterious to us. We are so used to mechanical universe, we can't figure it out. So, overarching fundamental.

Get it down and get it right. Be sure you are the faithful. Nobody wants to be on the consequences list.

So, the commands to the faithful. Number one, what I command you, speak. That's Jeremiah's job.

He's a speaker. What's your job? You might be a listener. What I command you, listen to.

If you're a listener, listen. If you're a speaker, speak. If you're a doer, do.

What is your assignment? This is the best thing. I have found this to be the most therapeutic, helpful, centering, objectivity enhancing exercise ever. If I am faced with a decision, if I get knocked for a loop, if I'm suddenly, there's one more plate than I've got sticks, this is what I do.

Who am I? Why am I here? Who am I? My particular case, I am a communicator of the word of God. I am a husband. I am a father.

I am a son. These are givens. There's no question or debate.

And those are definitional. There are certain things you just know. And in those areas, I have responsibilities.

I have opportunities. I have joys and I have concerns. But they are wrapped up in those identifying things.

Start with that. Command number one, chapter one, verse seven and verse 17, what I command you, this is what you do. He's commanding Jeremiah, who is a speaker, a prophet, to speak.

I have assigned you a role. Do it. Whatever you do, do it heartily as to the Lord, not unto men.

My dad wrote that on the fly leaf of the Bible I was given at high school graduation. I've never forgotten it. It's a good verse from Paul.

What you do, do heartily as unto the Lord. That clarifies 85 to 90% of our priorities, our goals, our values, and our decisions. Go back and review, what did God make me? He made me a husband, a father, a son, communicator of the word of God.

That order kind of goes around like a pinwheel, depending on what part of the day, what thing I'm thinking about, what issue, which priority I'm observing, what goal I'm pursuing, what value I am honoring. Those things rotate. No one of them is more important than the other.

It's not more important to be a husband than to be a father. No more important to be a father than to be a son. No more important to be any of those things than to do what I'm doing right now.

So, in the moment, and you have those as well. Define them, think about them, and your number one command from Jeremiah is what God commands in those areas, do. I'm a son.

Do I have any commands? It's on the first table of the law, isn't it? Honor your father and mother. That's a command. It's a joyous thing to do.

When you love them, it's easy. But it's a command. It is a responsibility.

It's an opportunity. It's something to exploit, something to bear spiritual fruit in. And so, when I think about that role, I think through those things.

I am a husband. Do I have any commands as a husband? Yes, I do. You get the drift, right? So, figure out your things.

Number one, what I command you, do. Sometimes we forget. We don't stop and realize, you know, I do have some commands in this area.

I do have some guidance, some priorities that the Bible sets. Number two was the consequence of the faithless. I will utter judgments because they have forsaken me.

Is it possible for us to forsake the Lord? All we have to do is spend time on something else, right? It's forsaking by default. If I spend all 24 hours of my day doing other stuff, I have forsaken the Lord. If He's not a part of the day, if there's not some prayer, if there's not some reflection and meditation on what I have learned, if there's not some fellowship with other believers along the way, if I'm not aware of my identity as a son of God, servant of God, fellow believer with other believers, I have forsaken the Lord.

Don't kid yourself. If you don't spend time on it, you're not it. It's just that simple.

Number three, do not be dismayed. Start down this road. It can be daunting.

There can be big challenges. God is the God of big things. He's also the God of very small things.

But we should not be daunted. Do not be dismayed. Chapter 1, verses 17 and 19.

That's a command. So what I command you do, and when you get busy doing it, don't be daunted. Number four is the consequence.

You have forsaken me. You've appealed to other gods. You've worshipped the work of your own hands.

So easy to get enthralled with what we're doing. This is the most important thing. Look at what

I have made.

Look at what I am doing. Look at the ground I have covered. Look at the pile that I have shoveled or whatever.

Number four, you brought this on yourself. The judgment of God isn't because God is mean. It's not because He's petty, vindictive, shallow, human.

You brought this on yourself. Why? You're made in the image of God, and you made a choice. Live with it.

Make better choices. Right? Don't go looking for somebody to blame, and because God is the God of big things, you want to put big blame on Him. It's His fault that I'm the way I am.

It's His fault that circumstances are the way they are. He's all-powerful. Why didn't He do it different? Shut up.

You brought this on yourself. That's God's word to you. Get over yourself and get with the program.

He gave you free will. He's given you unlimited grace. He is an omnipotent God, and His omnipotence goes toward ensuring that your free will operates freely, and that when you choose for Him, cattle on a thousand hills are available.

The resources of heaven are at your disposal. God the Son is arguing in your favor in the courts of heaven. There are 10,000 times 10,000 angels serving God, ensuring that nothing stands in your way to get done what you need to get done, including meeting challenges and pushing against resistance.

It will be calibrated. It will be moderated. It will be mediated to be exactly right, just like a trainer in a gym will give you just the right exercise, just the right weight.

He's not going to say, well, I'll lift all of this for you because I don't want you to get hurt or tire yourself out or raise your heart rate. It's beneficial for us to push against resistance. It's why we're here.

If we didn't need resistance, didn't need push, we'd go to heaven where there is no resistance, right? So if you are facing judgment, it's because you brought it on yourself. That's the faithless. Number five, also for the faithless.

This would be a good time to return. Come back. You figured out that you went the faithless route.

You brought it on yourself, it being whatever it is that woke you up to pay attention to the list for the faithless. So the next thing is return. Chapter 3, verse 22.

Chapter 4, verse 1 and following. Chapter 4, verse 14. Verse 22 tells us that even though with repeated encouragements, the people in Judah did not.

Jeremiah hits them with this message hard. They don't get it. That was number five.

Number six, back to the commands of the faithful. And this comes back full circle. He tells Jeremiah, proclaim the message.

This means you iterate. Lather, rinse, repeat. I told you to do what I command you.

Don't be dismayed. By the way, do what I command you. Might be other commands.

You might have gotten the first one. Refine it. Shape it.

Get a grip on it. Do it better. Practice your swing.

Practice your delivery. Work on your follow through. Work on keeping your eye on the front sight.

So proclaim. Keep at it. Don't falter.

Don't slack off. Don't diminish. Don't say, well, I'm off to a good start.

This is like somebody who sprints out of the tape and then pretty soon everybody's past you. The next one is the same. When you look over the fence at the faithless and they've gotten the message and you may have had contact with them and they are not turning, don't waste your time trying to retrieve the irretrievable.

If they have been approached and they're not interested and they've been approached again and they're still not interested, it's heathen and tax collector time. You've got to put some distance between you and them. There is no better example of this in Scripture than the prodigal's father.

I would like to call that parable the parable of the prodigal's father because that father was wise enough when his son gets the itch and says, I've got a better plan than sticking around here with you doing your stuff. I want to take some loot and go do my thing. The father said, fine.

Here's your loot. You go. And when the guy started running out of cash and starting falling on hard times and the friends started drifting away and things started not going so well and the shine and the newness and the splash all wore off, the father did not send support checks.

The father didn't send a servant to go prop the guy up and drag him out of the gutter and get him back home and pay off his bar tab and the rest of it. The father is incommunicado and so during the time, this guy is figuring stuff out the hard way and he stays incommunicado and he does not reach out. He doesn't cajole.

He doesn't wheedle. He doesn't rationalize. He doesn't make a big long speech.

Father's out of the picture. He knows because he's wise. This guy's got to bang his head as hard as possible on the basement floor, which he does.

And he knows his father's character and he says, I can go back to my father. My father won't kick me out. I might have to be one of the servants, but I know my father will take me back.

This is the kind of parent we want to be. Son goes back. Father is overjoyed.

Slays a fatted calf, puts a ring on his finger, gives him a fresh robe. Why? Because he looks in his eyes and he sees that now he gets it. I see that you have turned.

No point praying for people who have not reached the point to turn. If they have made up their mind and they're happy in their path, you got to be the prodigal's father. Keep your own counsel.

Bide your time. Don't ask God to do what God is not going to do. God is the prodigal's father also and he is not going to support.

He's not going to mitigate. He is not going to interfere. He's going to let that person run themselves into the rocks and shoals, bust up their ship, get cast away, and reach the point where they realize that there is a need.

You cannot sell somebody something they don't have a felt sense of need for. You're not going to want something that you don't feel a need for. We can have crazy desires and I want a Skidoo or something.

That to me is crazy. Since I don't live near a lake and don't have a trailer. You see what I'm talking about.

Do not pray for them. That was the fourth command to the faithful which is number seven on our list. Number eight goes across the line to the faithless.

Even after all of this, there is still no return. They are still committed to a downward path. By the way, believers, they are believers.

These are God's people. They are in covenant relationship with Him. This is why He is dealing with them in hard discipline.

Whom the Lord loves, He chastens. He will scourge with a whip the sons that He receives. Don't get between the father, the rear end, and the application of corporal punishment.

Don't stick your hand in front of the paddle to soften the blow. Let God deal with His children. We are there anytime somebody has a question, anytime somebody wants to turn.

We are loving, we are supportive. But do not get in the way of God's dealing with someone who has not reached the point of turning. Remember that hating even the garment spotted by the

flesh? If you're going to reach into the fire and pull somebody out, you've got to really know what you're doing or you're going to get burned.

So, there's still no return. That was chapter 8 out of Jeremiah. So chapter 9, for the faithful, mourning will ensue.

You're going to be sad when you've got loved ones, when you've got friends, when you see people and, you know, from a human perspective, they're good people. You think, you know, shirt off the back, salt of the earth, you know, with you in a crisis, down when it counts and when the chips are down, they're there. You know, wonderful, humanly admirable people, but when they don't turn, it doesn't matter how nice you are on this earth.

It doesn't matter how good you are to people. Everybody you're nice to is going to die. Everybody that knows the nice thing you did is going to die.

There will be no memory of your nice deeds. People did wonderfully, selfless, altruistic, nice deeds back in 1887 and there's not a person alive that has any clue about it right now. Thousands and thousands of charitable deeds, thousands and thousands of neighbor-to-neighbor help when the house burned down, put on a new roof, all the rest of it, blown away in the wind.

Unless, what? If they were a believer and they did it as unto the Lord in faith, it's written in the heavenly books. That's the only good deeds that count. You can throw yourself on a grenade for whatever reason, brotherly love, but if you're not a believer and you don't do what you do as unto the Lord and out of the character that God has put in your soul, is God glorified when some godless agnostic throws himself on a grenade? If God is not glorified, it's not in the heavenly book.

And if it's not in the heavenly book, it dies with the last person that has any knowledge of it. Never to be revived, never to be of any use. So when we see good people going a bad way because they're not connected to God and they are slowly dying, it makes us mournful.

Mourning will ensue, chapter 9, verses 1 and 2. He says, oh, that I could leave and get, I don't want to watch this, it's too painful. You don't want to watch your pet be euthanized a lot of times. You don't want to see somebody go down a slow, agonizing path to death.

You don't want to sit there and watch the beautiful rose fade, wither, and fall to the ground in a brown heap. Mourning will ensue, but the wise will understand. This is chapter 9, verses 1 through 12.

So, command of the faithful, it's okay to mourn, it's okay to grieve and to feel bad. Just be sure that your wisdom comes along for the trip and that you understand, that you stay objective. You can be sad and you can grieve and you can cry over sad circumstances without sinning, without worrying, and without any embarrassment to your spiritual health and strength.

It's okay to weep. If the Lord Jesus Christ can weep, it's okay to weep. And He did it on multiple occasions for various reasons.

Nothing wrong with mourning, but bring your wisdom with it. When Jesus weeps over the city of Jerusalem, He gives out with a speech, doesn't He? There's content to His mourning. It's not abject, it's not hopeless.

It's conscious, it's wise. And He understands why it is the way it is. It's not the will of God that anybody perish.

It's not the will of God that anybody undergo painful judgment. But God is wise enough to know that it is not just necessary, it is essential that sin be dealt with, that evil be controlled and ultimately eliminated. It has to be, or everything God has ever created will be destroyed.

It's a cancer. It's a vicious, malignant, spreading death to everything that God has made if it's not kept in check and ultimately eliminated. The wise understand.

Chapter 9, verse 12. Number 10. Do not, this is a command for the faithful, don't follow the path of these people that are going a bad way.

Don't learn their ways. Chapter 9, verses 23 and 24. Don't learn the ways of the world.

Chapter 10, verses 2 through 5. How do you do that? This is one of those substitution things. There is a gap that has to be filled with something. And if you do not learn the ways of the world, then you are going to be remembering God.

Verse 11 through 16 of that chapter. Don't learn the ways of the world. Remember God.

It's God's ways that count. We don't always understand the ins and outs of it, but we put ourselves in the hands of a faithful God. We trust Him.

I don't understand what He's doing a lot of the time, but I trust Him. I trust Him with my life. I trust Him with my family.

I trust Him with my future. There is nothing that worries me about things that are in God's hands. It's the best place for them to be.

He has never done anything bad to me in my entire life. He has done nothing but bless me. He has turned my mistakes into blessings.

He has turned bad circumstances into blessings. He has involved me in His plan and purpose. Why should I mistrust Him? He has done nothing but act in my life for good.

I don't deserve any of it. And He did it anyway. What's not to trust? He has established a pattern.

Draw a line through the dots, and your next dot is going to be on that line. So just because you

can't see the dot doesn't mean it's not going to be on that exact same line of faithfulness, righteousness, justice, peace. So draw a line through the dots that God has put in your life in the past.

What do you think He's going to do this next time? Well, He's always provided up to this point, but you know what? Next week, there's no provision, and I'm going to starve. It just won't happen. So we trust Him.

Do not learn the ways of the world. The way of the world is to put your trust in the arm of flesh. What will the arm of flesh do? The arm of flesh will fail you.

Ye dare not trust your own arm of flesh. The arm of flesh will fail you. Don't learn the ways of the world.

Remember God. Number 11. There is doom coming to the faithless.

This is on the faithless list. It's a consequence. Why? It is what they do to themselves.

This harks back to point four. This is point 11. It is the fifth one on the consequence to the faithless.

They are doomed for what they do to themselves. Chapter 11, verse 17. Faithful, on the other hand, when they have questions, go to God.

This is what Jeremiah does. Go to God with questions. This is chapter 11, verse 18.

This is chapter 12, verse 1. When Jeremiah has a question, goes to his father, goes to God in heaven. Lord, I'm a little confused about this. Be nice if you could give me some clarity.

Go to God. 13, the one we left off with last time. Those who refuse to hear are like that ruined girdle, that ruined sash.

God told Jeremiah, bury it in the ground, left it there until it rotted and mildewed and got all skanky. Then he said, dig it up and put it on. And wear it around all of these people in Judah.

And they're going to say, what are you wearing that nasty, grotesque piece of clothing for? Because I'm God and that's you. Do you expect God to wear you around His waist looking like that? Do you expect God to support you, to sustain you, to carry you on, to just treat you as though you were as good as anybody else when you are rotted and degenerate and mildewed and nasty? Ask yourself, would any sane God carry you around on His hip like an ornament when you, by your own choice, have willfully gone exactly opposite of everything He stands for? Is He going to wear you like a badge and like a sash? No. He's going to take that dirty, corrupted sash off and discard it.

He has to. He's God. And He's not going to walk around with that thing.

So those who refuse to hear are like the ruined sash. That was chapter 13, verses 10 and 11. They love to wander.

Chapter 14, verse 10. They don't like the things of God. He doesn't appeal to them.

His authority bugs them. So what do they do? I'm going to look around and find something else. Anything else.

Anything but this. I do not want to submit myself under the mighty hand of God. I don't think He can exalt me in due time.

I don't think He will. I don't trust Him. I don't know Him.

Somebody else told me about Him. I don't like what they said. So boo on Him.

I love to wander. I'm going to go wander around, see what else is out there. There's got to be something else out there instead of God.

They love to wander. That's point 13. Okay.

So we took one session to make our review. In the next session, we're going to cover all the rest of the points. I will be terse and concise.

So have your pen in hand when the clock strikes because we will finish these points tonight. I promise. Let's take a break.