



November 25, 2018

“The Right Way to See a Wrong World”

Jeremiah 11-12

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Have you ever wondered why it seems that wicked people prosper and have no difficulties, but people who live for the Lord have adversity and trials? Jeremiah did. He was the target of an assassination plot by his neighbors, friends, and family! He knew what it was to face hardships, but he remained faithful to the Lord, despite his trials. In this message, Pastor Gary shares biblical counsel that will help us face similar difficulties without being overwhelmed by the adversities of life.

### Historical Background

1. Pastor Gary said: “There [was] a plot afoot by some of the men [of the town of Anathoth], who [wanted] to kill Jeremiah. Jeremiah [was] hated for speaking the truth, for telling people that their sin will have consequences. He [was] hated for telling them that their continued idolatry and rebellion against the Lord [would] incur the wrath of God, and he [was going] to bring the Babylonians... as the rod of his discipline and the vehicle of his judgment. The people of Judah [didn’t] want to hear this, they [didn’t] want to hear about sin, they [didn’t] want to hear about consequences, they [didn’t] want to hear about God, and so they despised Jeremiah.”
2. Jeremiah was from Anathoth, so the plot to kill him is even more remarkable, in that his neighbors, friends, and family were involved!
  - a. **Jeremiah 1:1** - *“The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, one of the priests at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin.”*
  - b. Jeremiah was a prophet and a priest, although the Bible doesn’t record any of his priestly ministry.
  - c. Anathoth was one of the cities in Israel where priests lived, so the plot to kill Jeremiah involved the spiritual and religious leaders!

- i. Because the priests were from the tribe of Levi, they had no inheritance of land, so God set apart cities for them.
  - d. The Bible tells us that members of his family were involved in the murder plot!
    - i. **Jeremiah 12:6** - *"Your brothers, your own family - even they have betrayed you; they have raised a loud cry against you. Do not trust them, though they speak well of you."*
- 3. Outside of the Lord revealing the murder plot, Jeremiah was completely unaware.
  - a. **Jeremiah 11:18-19** - *"Because the LORD revealed their plot to me, I knew it, for at that time he showed me what they were doing. I had been like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter; I did not realize that they had plotted against me, saying, 'Let us destroy the tree and its fruit; let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name be remembered no more.'"*
- 4. Jeremiah called out to God, asking him to wipe out everyone who was plotting to kill him.
  - a. **Jeremiah 11:20** - *"But, O LORD Almighty, you who judge righteously and test the heart and mind, let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you I have committed my cause."*
  - b. **Jeremiah 12:3b** - *"Drag them off like sheep to be butchered!"*
  - c. The Bible has no prohibitions against a prayer of vengeance, but we are instructed to let God take care of things.
    - i. **Romans 12:19** - *"Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay, says the LORD.'"*
  - d. Pastor Gary said: "While it might be okay to [pour] out our heart to the Lord when we're upset about somebody... we should never [take action on our own, because] that's God's right and privilege and prerogative to do what he wants to do, and if he chooses to or not, that's up to the Lord."
- 5. Pastor Gary said: "Just try to imagine the personal betrayal he must [have] been feeling. He was just trying to serve the Lord, [honor the Lord], and live for the Lord, and warn people whom he [loved, concerning] impending disaster that [was] coming. What's so wrong about that? He was just trying to do what's good and right and honor God, and people were trying to kill him, and all of this [started] to weigh on him. Jeremiah [began] to wonder [about] something that many of us wonder [about]. When there is evil and injustice in the world, particularly when some of that evil and injustice in the world is directed at us, [what are we to do?]"
  - a. **Jeremiah 12:1** - *"... Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease?"*
    - i. Jeremiah was respectful toward God when he asked these questions.

1. **Jeremiah 12:1** – *“You are always righteous, O LORD, when I bring a case before you.”*
6. Jeremiah questioned the Lord about the injustice and inequities of life, and at the same time he wanted the Lord to remember that he wasn't like those who were plotting to murder him.
- a. **Jeremiah 12:3** – *“Yet you know me, O LORD; you see me and test my thoughts about you.”*

### The Right Way To See A Wrong World

7. The righteous and unrighteous exist together for now.
- a. **Matthew 5:45b** – *“[God] causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”*
    - i. Pastor Gary said: “Because the righteous and the unrighteous will exist together in our world, and because the righteous and the unrighteous exist in our world, that means that some of the wonderful benefits of God's grace that pour over to the righteous, will also spill over to the unrighteous.”
      1. Sodom and Gomorrah are one biblical example of this principle.
        - i. Lot and his family lived in Sodom, so the mercy of God for Lot and his family spilled over to the entire city, but the moment Lot and his family left Sodom, judgment came from the Lord.
        - ii. The people of Sodom were the indirect recipients of God's blessing to one family.
      2. The opposite is also true, in that some of the wicked things that go on in our world as a result of sin and Satan, will impact our lives.
    - b. Christians must be reminded that their citizenship is in heaven!
      - i. **Philippians 3:20a** – *“But our citizenship is in heaven.”*
      - ii. **Hebrews 12:2** – *“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*
8. Through the challenges we face, God is preparing us for a greater race.
- a. **Jeremiah 12:5** – *“If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan?”*
  - b. Pastor Gary said: “[God was] basically saying that the challenges and difficulties we face in life help to strengthen and prepare us for greater plans that God has for us. ... Please hear me on this. I'm not saying that God causes

the adversities in order to strengthen and prepare us for greater purposes. I'm saying he uses our adversities and the things that we go through to strengthen and prepare us for more useful service in the kingdom."

9. We are accountable just for ourselves; don't compare yourself with others.
  - a. Pastor Gary said: "Life is about you and the Lord. Now, it's [also] about others and the Lord, and we should care about that, only in so much that we can share the gospel and evangelize so that other people can know the Lord too. But otherwise, don't worry about the [way you compare to others]. You need to worry about your own heart and your own life with the Lord and stop worrying about what other people are living like and how they have it. ... Here's what begins to happen: You [will] either move into the area of pride or resentment, and both of those are sin. You're either going to look at your life [and think that you have it good compared to others who aren't following and living for the Lord]. The opposite also happens [when you see that others seem to have it pretty good, while at the same time you're going through a lot] and you resent them. ... Don't play the comparison game! Just make sure it's right [between you and the Lord]."
  - b. **2 Corinthians 10:12** - *"We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise."*
  
10. The unrighteous will be judged in God's time.
  - a. Pastor Gary said: "[Some] people have a hard time processing all of this because they think that people are getting away with things. Let me tell you something; nobody gets away with anything... including ourselves, which is why we need the mercy of Lord. Otherwise, we would get the just punishment we deserve, but thanks be to God because of his mercy we don't have to suffer what we deserve because God is a forgiving God. ... [Eventually] it will catch up [with people]. God is a righteous judge, [and God will judge in his time]."
  - b. **Jeremiah 11:23** - *"Not even a remnant will be left to them, because I will bring disaster on the men of Anathoth in the year of their punishment."*
  - c. **Ecclesiastes 8:11-13** - *"When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, the hearts of the people are filled with schemes to do wrong. Although a wicked man commits a hundred crimes and still lives a long time, I know that it will go better with God-fearing men, who are reverent before God. Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow."*
  - d. **Hebrews 4:13** - *"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."*

11. Life isn't fair, but God is good.
  - a. Pastor Gary said: "Sometimes the pain of life causes us to think that God is not good, [because, if he was] good, he would have [prevented tragedy, difficulty or adversity]. ... We need to remember that even though at times life is not fair God is good. ... What we are really longing for is a world where there is no pain and there is no sorrow and there is no sin and there is no disappointment and there is no betrayal and there is no offense; that's heaven.
  - b. [Psalm 73:16-17](#) - *"When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny."*
  - c. [Psalm 73:23-26](#) - *"Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."*

#### Discussion Questions

1. Read [Jeremiah 11:18-23, 12:1-6](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. What are some of the ways you've experienced a negative reaction from your neighbors, friends, and family members concerning your faith in Jesus? (See #1 and #2 above)
3. How has the Lord given you discernment regarding relationships with others? (See #3 above)
4. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when they've cried out to the Lord in their distress, asking the Lord to do something about those causing the distress. (See #4 above)
5. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's remarks about Jeremiah's questions. (See #5 and #6 above)
6. Read and discuss the Scriptures and Pastor Gary's comments about the righteous and the unrighteous existing together. (See #7 above)
7. Read and discuss the Scriptures and Pastor Gary's comments about the challenges we face and how God is preparing us for greater things. (See #8 above)

8. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's remarks concerning what the Bible has to say about comparing ourselves with others. (See #9 above)
9. Read and discuss the Scriptures concerning God's timing when it comes to dealing with sin. (See #10 above)
10. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about the fact that life isn't fair, but God is good. (See #11 above)
11. Read and discuss [Psalm 73](#).
12. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).

