

My Favorite Thing About JEREMIAH and LAMENTATIONS

Jeremiah 1:4-10

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Jeremiah was born during the reign of Manasseh – Judah's worst king. Little is known about his early life, but in the 13th year of Josiah's reign {627 BC}, Jeremiah got THE CALL.

Which brings us to **My Favorite Thing About JEREMIAH**. He was a reluctant prophet. He did not apply for the job and when God called, he protested:

- **Jeremiah 1:6** - "Ah, Sovereign LORD," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am only a child."

And would continue to protest throughout his ministry:

- **Jeremiah 15:15-21** - You understand, O LORD; remember me and care for me. Avenge me on my persecutors. You are long-suffering-- do not take me away; think of how I suffer reproach for your sake. ¹⁶ When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight ¹⁷ I never sat in the company of revelers, never made merry with them; I sat alone because your hand was on me and you had filled me with indignation. ¹⁸ Why is my pain unending and my wound grievous and incurable? Will you be to me like a deceptive brook, like a spring that fails?
- **Jeremiah 20:7-18** - O LORD, you deceived; me, and I was deceived you overpowered me and prevailed. I am ridiculed all day long; everyone mocks me. ⁸ Whenever I speak, I cry out proclaiming violence and destruction. So, the word of the LORD has brought me insult and reproach all day long. ⁹ **But if I say, "I will not mention him or speak any more in his name," his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.** ...

Yet, he did what God asked him to do – at great personal cost:

- He was not allowed to marry or have a family (16:2).
- God gave him all sorts of crazy object lessons to perform before the people:
 - **Buy a new belt – go bury it behind a rock – go retrieve the belt – ruined and completely useless - Jeremiah 13:1-10 -** ⁹ **"This is what the LORD says: 'In the same way I will ruin the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. ¹⁰ These wicked people, who refuse to listen to my words, who follow the stubbornness of their hearts and go after other gods to serve and worship them, will be like this belt-- completely useless!**
 - **Go buy a clay pot – take some elders and priests with you to the Valley of Hinnom – break the jar - Jeremiah 19:1-11 -....** say, 'Hear the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah and people of Jerusalem. This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: **Listen! I am going to bring a disaster on this place that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle. ⁴ For they have forsaken me and made this a place of foreign gods; they have burned sacrifices in it to gods that neither they nor their fathers nor the kings of Judah ever knew, and they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent....** This is what the LORD Almighty says: **I will smash this nation and this city just as this potter's jar is smashed and cannot be repaired....**
 - **Go make a yoke – put it on and carry it around Jerusalem - Jeremiah 27:2-12** "Then send word to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon through the envoys who have come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah king of Judah. ⁴ "Tell this to your masters: ⁵ With my great power and outstretched arm I made the earth and its people and the animals that are on it, and I give it to anyone I please. ⁶ Now I will hand all your countries over to my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.... ⁸ If, however, any nation or kingdom will not serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon or bow its neck under his yoke, I will punish that nation with the sword, famine and plague, declares the LORD, until I destroy it by his hand.... ¹¹ But if any nation will bow its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, I will let that nation remain in its own land to till it and to live there, declares the LORD." "" ¹² I gave the same message to Zedekiah king of Judah. I said, "Bow your neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon; serve him and his people, and you will live.
- His life was threatened by the leaders who opposed his message, including his own family:
 - **Jeremiah 26:8-15** - But as soon as Jeremiah finished telling all the people everything the LORD had commanded him to say, the priests, the prophets and all the people seized him and said, "You must die!
- Court **"prophets"** challenged him at every turn:
 - **Jeremiah 28:1-17** - In the fifth month of that same year, the fourth year, early in the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, the prophet **Hananiah** son of Azzur, who was from Gibeon, said to me in the house of the LORD in the presence of the priests and all the people: ² **"This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon. ³ Within two years I will bring back to this place all the articles of the LORD's house that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon removed from here and took to Babylon. ⁴ I will also bring back to this place Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim king of Judah and all the other exiles from Judah who went to Babylon,' declares the LORD, 'for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.'"** ⁵ Then the prophet Jeremiah replied to the prophet Hananiah before the priests and all the people who were

standing in the house of the LORD. ⁶ He said, "Amen! May the LORD do so! May the LORD fulfill the words you have prophesied by bringing the articles of the LORD's house and all the exiles back to this place from Babylon. ⁷ Nevertheless, listen to what I have to say in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people: ⁸ From early times the prophets who preceded you and me have prophesied war, disaster and plague against many countries and great kingdoms. ⁹ But the prophet who prophesies peace will be recognized as one truly sent by the LORD only if his prediction comes true." ¹⁰ Then the prophet Hananiah took the yoke off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah and broke it, ¹¹ and he said before all the people, "This is what the LORD says: 'In the same way I will break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon off the neck of all the nations within two years.'" At this, the prophet Jeremiah went on his way. ¹² Shortly after the prophet Hananiah had broken the yoke off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: ¹³ "Go and tell Hananiah, 'This is what the LORD says: You have broken a wooden yoke, but in its place you will get a yoke of iron. ¹⁴ This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I will put an iron yoke on the necks of all these nations to make them serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and they will serve him. I will even give him control over the wild animals.'" ¹⁵ **Then the prophet Jeremiah said to Hananiah the prophet, "Listen, Hananiah! The LORD has not sent you, yet you have persuaded this nation to trust in lies. ¹⁶ Therefore, this is what the LORD says: 'I am about to remove you from the face of the earth. This very year you are going to die, because you have preached rebellion against the LORD.'" ¹⁷ In the seventh month of that same year, Hananiah the prophet died.**

- He was imprisoned:
 - **Jeremiah 37:12-16** - Jeremiah started to leave the city to go to the territory of Benjamin to get his share of the property among the people there. ¹³ But when he reached the Benjamin Gate, the captain of the guard, whose name was Irijah son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah, arrested him and said, "You are deserting to the Babylonians!" ¹⁴ "That's not true!" Jeremiah said. "I am not deserting to the Babylonians." But Irijah would not listen to him; instead, he arrested Jeremiah and brought him to the officials. ¹⁵ They were angry with Jeremiah and had him beaten and imprisoned in the house of Jonathan the secretary, which they had made into a prison. ¹⁶ Jeremiah was put into a vaulted cell in a dungeon, where he remained a long time.
- He was thrown down a well:
 - **Jeremiah 38:3-6** - And this is what the LORD says: 'This city will certainly be handed over to the army of the king of Babylon, who will capture it.'" ⁴ Then the officials said to the king, "This man should be put to death. He is discouraging the soldiers who are left in this city, as well as all the people, by the things he is saying to them. This man is not seeking the good of these people but their ruin." ⁵ "He is in your hands," King Zedekiah answered. "The king can do nothing to oppose you." ⁶ So they took Jeremiah and put him into the cistern of Malkijah, the king's son, which was in the courtyard of the guard. They lowered Jeremiah by ropes into the cistern; it had no water in it, only mud, and Jeremiah sank down into the mud.

He lifted his prayers to the Lord and poured out his grief over the sins of the nation, but he was never able to prevent the downward spiral. The people only hardened their hearts and stubbornly refused to listen and eventually, those conditional prophecies became a certainty.

The final siege of Jerusalem began in **588 BC** and as Jeremiah looked out over the once proud and beautiful city, he wept and out of the depths of his sorrow came his Lamentations:

- **Lamentations 1:1** - How deserted lies the city, once so full of people! How like a widow is she, who once was great among the nations! She who was queen among the provinces has now become a slave.
- **Lamentations 2:13** - What can I say for you? With what can I compare you, O Daughter of Jerusalem? To what can I liken you, that I may comfort you, O Virgin Daughter of Zion? Your wound is as deep as the sea. Who can heal you?
- **Lamentations 3:46-48** - All our enemies have opened their mouths wide against us. ⁴⁷ We have suffered terror and pitfalls, ruin and destruction." ⁴⁸ Streams of tears flow from my eyes because my people are destroyed.
- **Lamentations 4:1-2** - How the gold has lost its luster, the fine gold become dull! The sacred gems are scattered at the head of every street. ² How the precious sons of Zion, once worth their weight in gold, are now considered as pots of clay, the work of a potter's hands!

The siege of Jerusalem was a terrible thing. As it dragged on for 17 months, Jeremiah began to consider the human cost of rebellion:

- **Lamentations 4:4-5** - Because of thirst the infant's tongue sticks to the roof of its mouth; the children beg for bread, but no one gives it to them. ⁵ Those who once ate delicacies are destitute in the streets. Those nurtured in purple now lie on ash heaps.
- **Lamentations 4:7-10** - Their princes were brighter than snow and whiter than milk, their bodies more ruddy than rubies, their appearance like sapphires. ⁸ But now they are blacker than soot; they are not recognized in the streets. Their skin has shriveled on their bones; it has become as dry as a stick. ⁹ Those killed by the sword are better off than those who die of famine; racked with hunger, they waste away for lack of food from the field. ¹⁰ With their own hands compassionate women have cooked their own children, who became their food when my people were destroyed.
- **Lamentations 5:15-16** - Joy is gone from our hearts; our dancing has turned to mourning. ¹⁶ The crown has fallen from our head. Woe to us, for we have sinned!

The people suffered in the extreme, but they refused to surrender, so in 586 BC, Jerusalem was destroyed and the Temple dismantled:

- **Jeremiah 52:12-27** - On the tenth day of the fifth month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard, who served the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. ¹³ **He set fire to the temple of the LORD, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem. Every important building he burned down. ¹⁴ The whole Babylonian army under the commander of the imperial guard broke down all the walls around Jerusalem.... ¹⁷ The Babylonians broke up the bronze pillars, the movable stands and the bronze Sea that were at the temple of the LORD and they carried all the bronze to Babylon. ¹⁸ They also took away the pots, shovels, wick trimmers, sprinkling bowls, dishes and all the bronze articles used in the temple service. ¹⁹ The commander of the imperial guard took away the basins, censers, sprinkling bowls, pots,**

lampstands, dishes and bowls used for drink offerings-- all that were made of pure gold or silver. ²⁰ The bronze from the two pillars, the Sea and the twelve bronze bulls under it, and the movable stands, which King Solomon had made for the temple of the LORD, was more than could be weighed.... So, Judah went into captivity, away from her land.

Jeremiah's heart broke as he looked at his beloved city. He had done everything he could, but the people had made their choice and now.... Jerusalem was **GONE!**

- **Charles Swindoll:** At one time or another, all of us have enjoyed the fleeting pleasures of sin... Because, we are sinners by nature, we are prone to shove aside, the anguishing reality of the effects of compromise, so that, we can more thoroughly embrace the thrills of evil. Realizing this, the Lord has graciously inspired and preserved the Lamentations of Jeremiah, which records, the devastating consequences that flowed from Judah in rebellion against God. As we read the pages of this book we will find ourselves asking if the bitter fruit of disobedience is worth the tremendous price it exacts.

Jeremiah struggled with the mission God gave him. He is known as the *"weeping prophet"* because he mourned the sins of his people. He wanted to see hearts changed and grieved his lack of success in turning the people back to God, yet he faithfully carried out God's instructions in the face of unrelenting opposition. He simply would not quit. Jeremiah chose to completely identify himself with the cause of God. His messages were never very popular, but for over 40 years, he persistently and courageously delivered them anyway.

And that's **My Favorite Thing About JEREMIAH and LAMENTATIONS.**