



## WEEK 5

# Reflection notes on Jeremiah

September-November 2021

### ***Jeremiah's Call: Hope and Lament in a Time of Change***

From 12 September to 28 November, we're exploring the book of Jeremiah in a sermon series. We encourage you to read over the assigned passages of Scripture and to reflect prayerfully in the week before each sermon.

#### **Week 5: Jeremiah's struggle with God and Judah** (*For 10 Oct. please review chapters 11-20*)

*'This is what the Lord says: "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh and whose heart turns away from the Lord. That person will be like a bush in the wastelands; they will not see prosperity when it comes. They will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. "But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."*

*The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?' — Jeremiah 17: 5-9*

In today's world, many people are in search of a spiritual journey. They seek this practice or that teaching and find the road to enlightenment can be full of bumps, disappointments and push back. It's up and down because often the person's own satisfaction is their ultimate goal.

For the follower of Jesus, the Christian journey can also be full of bumps but not because of seeking personal satisfaction. In fact, the Christian journey is a perpetual return back to the only One who can give us true satisfaction: The One True God.

These next 11 chapters in Jeremiah show the prophet's journey, one which is absolutely full of bumps, threats on his life and beatings as well as betrayals, discouragement and disappointments. Time and again he challenges the people of God to return to the Lord, only to be ignored, marginalised or ultimately punished (20:1-6). Jeremiah's obedience, it becomes clear, is costly and takes its toll on him.

As we follow his journey throughout these chapters, we hear a three-way dialogue of sorts between Jeremiah, God and Judah. God again says, ‘Hear the words of my covenant’ (11:6) and his warnings about impending judgment if everyone ‘walks in the stubbornness of his evil heart’(11: 8). We hear the people’s rebellion, and we listen to the prophet’s complaint about their stubbornness as well as his many questions for God (12: 1-4). Yet God holds out hope in answering his prophet, reminding him of his judgment *and* compassion (12:15).

So Jeremiah presses on, the people remain disobedient and the Lord does not relent. Jeremiah knows God’s word is true, that the nation faces invasion and though he struggles to serve God faithfully, he stays the course. Opposition surprises him (11:1-12) and at times he even feels as if God has betrayed him (13:1-15:21).

When we get to the middle of these chapters, we hear the Lord’s wisdom in 17: 5-9, wisdom that helps the discouraged prophet better understand his own devotion to the Creator. Again we see the connection between not trusting God (17:6) and the harm that does, versus the blessings and good that come when we do trust God. In a passage similar to Psalm 1, we read how the one who trusts the Lord is like the ‘tree planted by water’.

Yet the human heart is deceptive and sick—one in need of the Great Physician whom Jeremiah’s very life and ministry points to. Jeremiah feels the weight of God’s word, the ‘burning fire in his bones’ (20:9) and we see again that the journey of the faithful leads to the Word Made Flesh. Only Jesus, by taking on God’s judgment on the cross, allows us to be free to move forward, to live in the new covenant of God’s eternal promises, even if it’s costly.

#### **Reflection Questions:**

1. Consider the times God called you to a certain journey that wasn’t easy. What happened?
2. Re-read Jeremiah 17:5-10. Ask God to search your heart. What are some fears or worries you might have that you could give over to God as he plants you beside his living waters?
3. What do you think the verse ‘the heart is deceitful above all things’ means for us in modern times?

**Prayer:** *Loving God, thank you that you are with us on this journey. Please give us ears to hear your voice over all the others and to be faithful to your call to serve others with the Gospel, come what may. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

Sources: John Stott, ‘Through the Bible, through the year’; English Standard Version Study Bible.