

Dr. Allan MacRae: Jeremiah: Lecture 7

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Laments and Imprecations of Jeremiah

Sovereignty and Free Will [0:0]

When troubles come to us, or difficulty, we can know that the Lord has allowed them to come to us because He has a good reason, a reason which in the end we'll be grateful for. It may be that they are His means of enabling us to serve him effectively in some way; it may be that they are His means of developing our character in some direction which He wants to go. One of the great reasons why He leaves us here in this world after we have come to Christ is in order to develop our character into the type of character that He wants to have fellowship with Him through all eternity. And so it is easy to get the idea that life is just a series of cut and dry events and man has no power of choice at all. I don't think anybody actually goes to that extreme, though some may talk as if they do, because if a person really believed that he had no power to make any choice or decision-- that everything was cut and dry-- I don't know why he'd ever get up in the morning. I don't know why he would bother to do anything.

Some may say, "The Lord has planned it all; it's just going to happen that way and there's nothing I can do about it." Well, nobody acts as if they believe that; we all know that we have many important choices to make. It is important to stress the sovereignty of God and stress God's complete control over everything. It's very important and it gives us an understanding of many things. But we also

have to recognize the tremendous responsibility that we have to use the abilities God has given us in ways that He desires and to make right choices, and these things don't just happen automatically. God has given us a will; he's given us a mind to use, and he expects and desires us to use it.

There are different sides to truth with some kinds that are hard for us to reconcile, and yet we know that in the mind of God they are reconciled. We know that there are maybe different sides we can't see, but His vision is far wider than ours. You have to get these thoughts across, but you can't every time you talk try to give a complete balance between sovereignty and free will. If you do, you don't affect anybody; you have to take one side of truth and push it hard. You may seem to be denying other truths by not referring to them, but then you take another side of truth and you push it hard, and you may seem to be denying the other side of truth.

Jeremiah and God's Hatred of Sin and Love for His People [2:54]

And so, we find that Jeremiah reflects a very true side of God's character, His hatred of sin. And I think we need to realize how terrible sin is: what an affront sin is to God's goodness and to God's majesty, to God's holiness. If we believe in the Scriptural teaching of everlasting punishment of those who are lost, we believe that sin is a very terrible thing and is something which deserves the greatest enunciation and condemnation that we can possible give to it.

On the other hand, the Scripture very clearly teaches that God is love, not in the sense that He's something mamby-pamby that you can just walk over and just

do whatever you feel like, but that God truly loves his very people. He longs for them to come to repentance; He desires that we come and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, and His heart is grieved when people turn against Him when we do what is contrary to his word. God is not just a picture of a wooden statue that stands there and does nothing. God is an active, a vital actor, the founder of the universe, the controller of all things. He has emotions just as we do, and feelings just as we do, only far stronger than ours could possibly be.

Jeremiah Denounces Sin [4:06]

And so Jeremiah came at a time when it was necessary to call the people's attention to their sin and to how terrible it is, and to the results that God was going to bring upon the nation for their sin. That is a very strongly emphasized feature of Jeremiah's teaching, and God's hatred of sin must be an emphasis in the preaching of any true Christian. On the other hand, if you take just those passages, many as there are, you get the impression of Jeremiah that he was one who was rather vindictive and forthright in condemnation of his people. He points out how God was going to punish them and this is very unlike the character of Jesus that we find in the New Testament.

Jeremiah as the Weeping Prophet [4:49]

If you get that impression of Jeremiah, then immediately you would need to ask the question, "Why is it that Jeremiah is so often referred to as the weeping prophet?" That is the way he is characterized, as the "weeping prophet."

Jeremiah was one who denounced sin, but one who wept over the sins of the

people. Now that comes out in the book of Jeremiah here and there, but is not as strongly emphasized as his denunciation of sin. However, Jeremiah also wrote the book of Lamentations, and in those five chapters in the book of Lamentations, we find Jeremiah weeping over the destruction of Jerusalem, weeping over the exile and over the suffering of the people.

Jeremiah's Weeping over Exile and Suffering [5:26]

We find glimpses of this attitude of Jeremiah, very strong glimpses, in fact, at many points throughout the book of Jeremiah. And I want to call your attention to a few passages that bring this out. In chapter 9:1, he says, "Oh that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears; I would weep day and night for the slain of my people." Then in that same chapter, in verses 12 and 13, we read, starting in the last part of verse 12, "Why has the land been ruined and laid waste like a desert that no one can cross? The LORD said, 'it is because they have forsaken my law that I have set before them; they have not obeyed me or followed my law.'" Then in chapter 11:4 we read, starting the middle of verse 3, "The LORD speaks, 'I said obey me and do everything I command you, and you will be my people and I will be your God. Then I will fulfill the oath I swore to your forefathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, the land you possess today.'"

And then you have the end of the verse "I answered, Amen LORD." It says in the King James, "I answered so be it." Well, right at this point, where God gives a glimpse of the blessing that He will give to the people if they turn from their sin,

Jeremiah just can't restrain himself; he says, "I answered, 'so be it LORD.'" It gives us a picture and a feeling of the prophet and of his desire for the welfare of his people.

Jeremiah's Weeping [7:00]

In chapter 14:17 he says, "Speak this word to them: let my eyes overflow with tears night and day without ceasing, for my virgin daughter, my people, has suffered a grievous, a crushing blow. If I go into the country I see those slain by the sword, if I go into the city I see the ravages of famine. Both prophet and priest have gone to a land they know not." Then he calls out to the LORD, "Have you rejected Judah completely? Do you despise Zion? Why have you afflicted us so that we cannot be healed? We hope for peace, but no good has come for a time of healing, but there is only terror. Lord, we acknowledge our wickedness and the guilt of our fathers; we have indeed sinned against you. For the sake of your name, do not despise us; do not dishonor your glorious throne; remember your covenant with us, and do not break it. Do any of the worthless idols of the nations bring rain? Do the skies themselves send down showers? No, it is you, O Lord, our God; therefore our hope is in you, for you are the one who does all this." And so we have these glimpses all through of Jeremiah's love for his people, of his longing that they would return from their sin; of his weeping over the punishment that the Lord had ordered him to predict and to declare His coming because of the sin of the people.

Some prophets emphasize one phase of judgment, some another; but this is the phase which is very definitely present here. God ordered Jeremiah to particularly stress for his time the denunciation of sin and declaration of the punishment that was coming.

Jeremiah and Jesus: Denunciation of Sin [8:41]

Incidentally, at that point we compare Jeremiah with our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus's message was primarily, of course, a message of God's love and mercy for all who would believe on Christ, for he who would believe on Jesus is not condemned, but he who believeth not is condemned already. This denunciation of sin in what the Lord says in the Gospels. While it occupies a comparatively small part of the contents of the Gospel, it is perhaps as emphatic and as strong as anything anywhere in the Scripture. I think this particularly comes out in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew where we read the Lord saying in verses 13-15: "Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces, yet you yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert and when he becomes one, you make him twice as great a son of hell as yourselves."

Jesus continues in much the same strain through the chapter. For instance in verse 27, "Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside, but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way on the outside

you appear to people as righteous, but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous,” and so on.

There is great denunciation by the Lord occasionally of sin. We have a false idea of the Pharisees. The Pharisees were the religious leaders of the day. The Pharisees were the people who seemed to be most pious. Paul said he had been a Pharisee. Their great fall was self-righteousness. Many of them were hypocrites but many of them certainly were not. Certainly they were among the best of the religious people of Jesus’ day, but He denounced them violently for these aspects of self-righteousness and other aspects which he wishes to warn us very particularly against. So I don’t think we should-- though we can’t compare any human being with the Lord Jesus Christ because he represents the most perfect balance of characteristics of any individual who ever lived--yet I don’t think we should be too hard on Jeremiah for the difficult task God gave him of denouncing the sin of the people, a denunciation which brought to him great suffering and anguish. It caused his close friends to turn against him, and some of them to even try to get him killed.

Order of Jeremiah Versus Order of Lamentations [11:25]

Now, I wish we could go in detail over the rest of Jeremiah which we can’t, but I do want to hit many important things. When sections may not be of less importance, but we’re going to have to skip over them. This next section I think I will not mention to you. I have made a rough division of this section, but it is hard

to make precise divisions because of the fact that Jeremiah's thought moves from one subject to another so rapidly at times, and also because of the way the book was put together. It's interesting to note the contrast between the way the book of Jeremiah was put together and the way his book of Lamentations was put together. The book of Lamentations has five chapters and several of them are an acrostic with each verse beginning with a succeeding letter of the Hebrew alphabet. One of the chapters has three verses beginning with the first letter of the alphabet, then three with the second, three with the third and so on. The book of Lamentations Jeremiah put time in working over to make it a beautiful, structured production. It was written when he was looking back on his life and had leisure to do this, while the book of Jeremiah is written in the midst of the exciting situations which he faced.

Jer 15: Jeremiah's Lament [12:40]

I have divided Jeremiah into sections, some larger and some smaller, and we were speaking about section six last time, but I think that we should rush on to get to the particular points that were given in the assignment today. I have in front of you my division of what follows what. I think it is wise to look for just a minute now at chapter fifteen starting at verse ten, and there we read his complaint, which sounds so much like part of the assignment we for today, you'd almost think it is the same. It is a precursor for what was in the assignment today.

Starting with verse ten he says, "Alas my mother that you gave me birth, a man with whom the whole land strives and contends. I have neither lent nor

borrowed, yet everyone curses me. The LORD said, ‘surely I will deliver you for a good purpose, surely I will make your enemies plead with you in times of disaster and times of distress.’” And the Lord continues to speak to him towards chapter fifteen, verses fourteen and fifteen. He says, “You understand O LORD, remember me and care for me. Avenge me on my persecutors. You are longsuffering; do not take me away. Think of how I suffer reproach for your sake. When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart’s delight, for I bear your name, O LORD, God almighty. I never sat in the company of revelers nor made merry with them. I sat alone because your hand was on me and you had filled me with indignation. 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?”

And now listen to these verses which end chapter fifteen, “If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve Me, if you utter worthy, and not worthless words, you will be My spokesman. Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them. I will make you a wall to this people, a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you to rescue and save you, declares the Lord. I will save you from the hands of the wicked and redeem you from the grasp of the cruel.”

Uriah Killed and Jeremiah Protected (Jer 26) [15:00]

And you remembered how we already looked at the later chapter in which we read how king Jehoiakim tried to kill Jeremiah and the nobles protected Jeremiah. But Uriah, who has preaching much the same message as Jeremiah, the

king sent orders to see him. Uriah escaped and went to Egypt, but the king sent representatives clear to Egypt and seized him and brought him back and killed him (Jeremiah 26:23). So we see what danger Jeremiah was in through most of his life. But God had told Jeremiah at the beginning of his ministry that God was going to protect him and God did protect him, though a long life of ministry to God. In God's sight, who can say who was the greater, Jeremiah or Uriah. Uriah served God by suffering for His sake and speaking for His truth no matter what it cost him, and it cost him suffering and ultimately his life. Jeremiah served God preaching His truth and God protected him through it. We don't know what God's will is in the case of any one of us, but we know that if we are to be faithful to God, He will work out the circumstance in such a way that our lives will accomplish exactly what He desires us to accomplish.

Jeremiah 20 [16:18]

Now, I read you this section here particularly because I wanted to introduce from it the section that we had assigned for today. There are many interesting things in the next few chapters but I'm going to skip over to chapter twenty where we get most of the problems that were listed in your papers for today. I asked you to go through chapters eighteen through twenty and to see in those chapters what was said about Jeremiah, or to Jeremiah, and to list those things, and to list any problems you saw, and I was glad to see that a few of you understood everything so well in the chapters that you did not see any problems in them. But I was better pleased, perhaps, with those who did find certain major problems in this section

most anyone could see, and I was also pleased with those who raised some interesting questions, some of which I hadn't noticed before, but which are well-worth looking into.

Jeremiah's Imprecation (Jer 18:23) [17:13]

But the big problem that people find in these chapters is at the end of chapter eighteen. There is in Jeremiah 18:23 a strong plea that God will punish the people who are trying to kill Jeremiah where he says, "You know, LORD, all their plots to kill me, do not forgive their crimes or blot out their sins from your sight. Let them be overthrown before you; deal with them in the time of your anger." And we have occasional prayers like that from Jeremiah to God in the course of his book, calling on God for the pouring of His wrath on the people who are opposing the word of God in this violent way at that time. And that constitutes a problem for us because we think of the forgiving attitude that God wants us all to have, and yet here we have this calling on God to give punishment.

Well, the problem here is the same as the problem of the imprecatory psalms, like Psalms 109 or 137. And we can't get away from the fact that there are a number of psalms in which God is called upon in very strong terms to pour out His wrath on the workers of iniquity. And I believe we have to explain these passages as well as the imprecatory psalms by recognizing this is a side, a true side, of God's character; that while God is most loving and gracious and forgiving, God also must uphold His righteous law, that sin must be punished, and that sin is so terrible that along with His wonderful love and His wonderful forgiveness that

led him to send Christ to die for our sins, God also shows His true and proper judgment against sin and wickedness that is brought out in the imprecatory psalms and is brought out in a few passages, not many, in Jeremiah in which this attitude seems to be shown, and I think we recognize these passages as showing a part or an aspect of the character of God. Unfortunately, an aspect that's all too easy for us to fall into, I think for most of us is that it is much better to emphasize the other side—God's love--particularly as we think of people's relation to *us*. We emphasize the forgiveness of those who do things against us personally, and we show forth God's love in that way and God often uses that in ways that we would never dream of for His glory and for winning people to Him.

Jer 20:7 Jeremiah's Complaint of Being Deceived by God [19:33]

But now at the end of chapter twenty there is a section, verses seven through eighteen, which I think raises greater problems than what we just covered. In verse seven you have the beginning of Jeremiah's complaint. You have a statement, which as it stands should raise a very, very serious problem to anyone. I was disappointed whenever anyone didn't mention the problem in chapter twenty, verse seven, "O LORD, you deceived me and I was deceived." How can anyone accuse God of deceiving him? Could the God of truth deceive anyone? It is a terrible thing to suggest, and yet that is the translation that we find of this in the King James Version, NASB, RSV, and here in the NIV. In the American Standard Version it said, "O Jehovah, Thou hast persuaded me, and I was persuaded." And that sounds altogether different from deceived, doesn't it? The

New English Bible has a different rendering, it says, “O LORD, thou has duped me, and I’ve been thy dupe.” I think that’s the worst yet.

Beck Translation and Lutheranism (Jer 20:7) [20:41]

I like perhaps better the translation in Beck’s translation, and incidentally, I don’t know whether any of you know anything about Beck’s translation. Beck was a Lutheran Scholar who a few years ago decided to devote himself to making a new translation of the Bible. He was a thorough Bible believer, and a very fine scholar, and he made a translation of the New Testament which was published by I believe, the Lutheran Press. He continued work and finished his translation on the Old Testament and then died, but by that time Concordia Seminary, which was the seminary of the Missouri Lutherans, had become so controlled by the modernists that they ignored his work completely.

The Missouri Concordia Seminary, as you know, is one of the few seminaries which have ever come under the control of modernists, and then been won back again for belief in the Scripture. Those who were in charge of it before have now started what they call the “Seminary in Exile” in St. Louis.

But Beck then died, and the people who should have been his good friends were so busy with the effort to try to save Concordia that they were not in a position to give much thought or attention to the work that he had done. But there was a man who published a paper for a long time called the “Lutheran News,” later changed to be called the “Christian News.” He’s pastor of a Lutheran Church and it really amazes me that he was able to do all that he did, including the

tremendous amount that he's published in that paper. He sent it to me for a number of years, though I haven't seen it in recent years. But he became so interested in this work of Beck's that he got the whole thing published, and I have found that in many places Beck exactly gets the idea of the original. It is a thorough translation and represents very fine scholarship, and is well worth having, though I fear that it won't get near the attention that the amount of work he put in deserves.

Jer 20:7 Mislead/Seduced/Enticed/Deceived [22:35]

Beck says, "LORD, thou hast misled me, and I have let you mislead me, you grabbed me and conquered me." The Berkley version says, "Thou didst persuade me, O LORD, and I was persuaded." The Jerusalem Bible says, "You have seduced me YHWH, and I have let myself be seduced," and the Darby Version says, "Jehovah, thou has enticed me, and I was enticed."

Now, there is quite a variation of translations, and it gives us an idea of this particular Hebrew word here translated in the ways we have seen. It does not mean to tell something that is untruthful; that is not the meaning of it. The meaning of it is to lead someone into a course of action which he would not have taken without that pressure, and usually into a bad direction of action into something that would be very unpleasant to him, or that goes against something that he never would have chosen by himself. The emphasis is on action, on the result of action rather than upon the substance of ideas presented.

And so in this verse "deceived" gives an utterly false impression, the true

meaning of this verse: "You deceived me and I was deceived, you overpowered me and prevailed;" is "O God, you brought me into a situation which I never could have chosen by myself. I did not see the consequences of it; I'm in this situation not of my own volition," and that is something that any of us can truly say when we, using the best judgment we have and seeking God's will the best we can, find ourselves in a situation which is very unpleasant to us, a situation which we would have never come into if we had known all the facts.

Prov 1:10 "Enticed" [24:23]

It is the same word used in Proverbs 1:10, where it says, "My son, if sinners entice thee" is the King James there, "if sinners entice thee." The sinners are not telling him what is false; the sinners are leading him into a course of action into which he would not go if he stopped and thought how contrary it is to what he should do.

Now, in Jeremiah's case, it is not contrary to what Jeremiah should do; it is exactly what he should do, but it is contrary to what he would have been able to select if he had known all the facts, and that is true of all of us in our lives--that we have to make decisions without knowing all the facts that may enter in. And God, you may remember, in Jeremiah chapter one, God told Jeremiah that He wanted him to speak His word and to represent Him; and Jeremiah said, "I am just a child, I can't speak," and God gave him the vision to show the great overturning of nations that was about to come in the world.

And God says, "I will make you a strong wall I will make you a tower. I

will protect you," and that would be a foreshadowing that there were tremendous dangers ahead in the course that God had for Jeremiah but Jeremiah had no realization of what he was getting into. If he had realized it fully, I believe he would have chosen the right thing, but when he gets into it he gives way to his feeling, "Oh, if I had only known what this would bring unto me; would I have had the will to choose to go into it? Lord, you have brought me into this situation here; you've overpowered me, and look at the situation that I am in."

Discouragement in Ministry [16:07]

And so he expresses his discouragement, and everyone who serves the Lord has times of discouragement. They say that Spurgeon one time was so discouraged, he felt so sure that his efforts to build a great tabernacle there in London were going to completely fail and he was going to go bankrupt, he was so depressed he just took to his bed in utter discouragement. Then one of the leaders of the church came in and poured out on the bed sufficient money to finish the building of the tabernacle to encourage him that the money had been raised and that his work was not going to come to a stop, and Spurgeon soon was one of the great representatives of faith in God, one of the great servants of God in the early part of the 20th century, but he had this period of depression.

1 Kings 22:21 Micaiah's Vision and Deceiving Spirit

And here we find Jeremiah in the same state. I think, however, he is representing something of the character of God: there is no question God weeps over His people. God is sad when we fail to do what He wants us to do. He

sympathizes with us in our difficulties. And so this verse [Jer. 20:7] I don't know how to translate it well-- I think perhaps Beck comes about as near as any.

Incidentally, a passage probably most of you are familiar with is contained both in Kings and Chronicles (1 Kings 22:21; 2 Chr. 18:20), where Micaiah appears before King Jehoshaphat, and Micaiah tells of his vision in which God says, "Who will induce Ahab to go out to this place to fight where he will be killed," and one of the spirits in a vision of Micaiah says, "I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of his prophets and will lead him out there." And the word used is translated in the King James in Kings as "who will persuade", this same word used in Jer. 20:7 "who will persuade him."

And in Chronicles they translate the same word "who will entice him." You see, the word does not convey the idea of something being false, nor does it in itself convey the idea it's true. It may often convey the idea of bringing someone to do something which is wicked, to do something which would be contrary to all his principles if he only thought it through carefully, but that meaning is not primarily in the word itself. The primary meaning of the word is to lead someone to do something without having carefully thought it through himself. Perhaps if he did think it through he just would be against it or would not have the courage to go ahead with it. This example shows that it is very difficult to translate from one language into another because a word in one language may have a precise meaning, or an area of meaning, and there may be no word in the other language that really corresponds to it.

So the first big problem is the word "deceived," which here looks to some as if Jeremiah accused God of deceiving him, which He doesn't. Jeremiah declares God has led him into a situation, which, if he had known the full consequences, he would not have had the strength of character to go into.

Jeremiah's Discouragement [29:22]

Now, the other big problem, which is perhaps a bigger problem than what we just covered, is the way the passage ends. He says in Jeremiah 20:8, "Whenever I speak, I cry out proclaiming violence and destruction, so the Word of God has brought me insult and reproach all day long." But then he says as he's meditating here, "I've gotten into this awful situation. If I had known I never would have gotten into it, but God has brought me into it, and here I am." But then he says (Jer. 20:9), "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.'"

Now, you may say, "Well now, every minister has times when he's tempted to give up preaching the word of God. He just feels hopeless and he says, 'O, if I only sold insurance instead, think of how much more money I'd make. How much happier I'd be, and I could witness for the Lord occasionally on the way, and the Lord could bless the work. Why do I have to stay in this thankless task when people don't appreciate me at all, and the church isn't growing the way it should.'"

He doesn't realize if he is truly giving the Word of God, even if the church isn't

growing that people may be growing in the Lord even if he doesn't realize this. But we all have these periods of discouragement.

Jeremiah expresses his discouragement in chapter twenty verses seven and eight, and then he says in verse nine, "But if I say I will not mention Him or speak anymore in His name, His word is in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones I am weary of holding it in, indeed I cannot." I think that's a wonderful expression of the one who truly knows God, the force that is within him, that he *must* make his life count for the Lord. What money he makes, or what fame he gets, or what praise he gets from others, it is nothing compared to going the way the Lord wants him to go whether it's the way he would choose himself or not. But then Jeremiah goes on in Jer. 20:17 praising God for what God has done: "But the LORD is with me like a might warrior, so my persecutors will stumble and not prevail. They will fail and be thoroughly disgraced. Their dishonor will never be forgotten. O LORD almighty, you who examine the righteous and probe the heart of mine, let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you I've committed my cause. Sing to the LORD; give praise to the LORD; He rescues the life of the needy from the hands of the wicked."

Jer 20:4 Jeremiah Curses the Day of His Birth [32:07]

Moving on there were a number of you who expressed as a problem, the fact that Jeremiah sings so, rejoicing and praising God in these verses, but in verse fourteen he curses the day he was born. What a contrast! How can he jump from the one idea to the other? But actually, that represents the human mind exactly as

he faces this problem: Shall I quit the ministry; shall I quit endeavoring to serve the Lord? How can I go on? Everybody criticizes me; things are not going well. I'm not accomplishing what I should. Think how much more money I could make, or think how much less misery I'd have if I'd go and teach in a school somewhere instead of trying to induce people to come to church and hear the message of God. Think of this and then you say, "O, but this is God's will; God has given me the message; I must get this message across." Then you think how powerful God is, and what God is going to do, has done, and is going to do with you, and you realize the wonderful grace and power of God. Then you sink into the misery again realizing you got to go on this way, and so you say, "Here I am."

And so in Jeremiah 20:4 he says, "Cursed be the day when I was born, may the day my mother bore me not be blessed. Cursed be the man who brought my father the news, who made him glad saying, 'A child is born to you, a son.' May that man be like the towns the Lord overthrew without pity. May he hear wailing in the morning, a battle cry at noon, for he did not kill me in the womb with my mother as my grave, her womb enlarged forever. Why did I ever come out of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and to end my days in shame." And that, of course, is a terrible cry of misery on Jeremiah's part. Of course, he doesn't literally mean that about the man who brought the news, but it is a vivid way of expressing, "O I wish I'd never been born. Look at this terrible situation I'm in." And it represents the discouragement and depression that one can so easily fall into.

Was Jeremiah Wrong? [34:14]

But was Jeremiah wrong in saying that God deceived him? Was he wrong in cursing the day that he was born? Was this a wicked thing on his part? I know many years ago a very godly man, a professor of Old Testament, a man who stood thoroughly for the truth of the Scripture and had studied the Old Testament many years more than I had at that time, and I said to him, “How do you explain these things?” “O,” he said, “that is simple,” He said look back at a chapter that I read to you just a few minutes ago, from chapter fifteen (verse 19) where the LORD says, “If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve me; if you utter worthy, not worthless words, you will be my spokesperson.” “So,” he said, “God is rebuking Jeremiah for speaking so harshly against his adversaries, He is rebuking Jeremiah for cursing the day he was born,” and I was shocked when that man said that, but his being much older than I, and more experienced than I, I did not tell him how I felt about his interpretation, but I was shocked.

And as I thought about the problem, I do not believe that God has put in His Word any false, or wicked, or erroneous ideas without labeling them so. True, the Bible says, "There is no God," (Ps. 14:1) but it says that the fool has said in his heart “There is no God.”

Was Paul being at Athens Wrong? [35:40]

I have heard the statement made that Paul made a great mistake when he tried to use philosophy at Athens in talking to the people, for when he went to Corinth and he just said nothing except about Christ and him crucified. Well, if

that was the case, that Paul made a mistake, I think the Scripture would make it clear. I'm not saying Paul never made a mistake; I'm sure he made lots of mistakes. I'm sure he said things that were unscientific, were unhistorical, as everyone of us has, but I believe that everything God caused to be put in the Scripture is true unless it is labeled otherwise.

Jeremiah as Picture of God's Grief [36:18]

So I believe that this complaint then, is not something for which God condemned Jeremiah. But I believe what Jeremiah expressed represents the danger we have of falling into expressing our earthly, human ideas instead of what God wants. We all fall into that in quite an extent, of course, but none of us are inspired. I think the writers of the Bible also fell into depression, but I think God kept their thoughts out of His word unless He labeled them as error. And so I believe that this expression of Jeremiah's is not only a true picture of the oppression and misery into which men fall, but is actually a picture of the mind of God. God faced this dilemma: "What can I do? I long to create men who have minds of their own, who can make decisions of their own, not just machines that you push a button here and you push a button there, but thinking intelligent individuals who will love me to eternity." And yet if He's going to do that, there is the possibility that they will turn against the Lord. They may actually be turning to sin or turning to wickedness. Even as Jesus wept over Jerusalem, even when he was condemning them for their sin and declaring the terrible things that would come, so the heart of God is expressed by the attitude of Jeremiah in these

passages. God also grieves over sin. He grieves saying, “O, that it were not so,” but the nature of God Himself is that while He is love, He also hates sin and grieves over the situations it produces, completely condemning it and guaranteeing the punishment for sin. Jeremiah says, “O, Cursed be the day that I was born.” I believe that that is the answer to this particular problem, and we won’t run any longer for today.

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