

Allan MacRae, Jeremiah: Lecture 8

© 2013, Dr. Perry Phillips and Ted Hildebrandt

Prophecy Fulfillment, Jeremiah's Discouragement

Assignment on Jer 24, 25, and 28: View of Previous Exiles [0:0]

Now, for today's assignment I asked you to look at parts of three chapters:

Jeremiah 24, 25, and 28. And in these three chapters I asked you two questions. The first question was quite simple. What did you find out about Jeremiah's idea or attitude towards the exiles of his time? I don't think in these chapters there's much reference to the exiles from the Northern Kingdom, but we have had some references to them earlier. They may or may not be included in part of these chapters. But these chapters deal with those who were taken into captivity in the fourth year of Jehoiakim.

You remember that before this when Jehoiakim became king, the Pharaoh of Egypt had taken his younger brother Jehoahaz, or Shallum, as his captive into Egypt. And there may have been some taken with him into exile in Egypt at that time. Though that was probably not a great number. But there was a very considerable number taken to Babylon in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, including Daniel.

In these three chapters there are certain statements made about these exiles and Jeremiah gives you a very good picture of these exiles. He says look at the people left here in Judah, they're like these rotten figs and the people in exile are like these good figs (Jeremiah 24:2). Ezekiel at the same time was in exile, and he was telling the people there, "You are a corrupt, degenerate group that's turning against God." So we certainly can't take it that all the people in exile were like good figs and all the people in Jerusalem

like bad figs. But it was Jeremiah's way of showing the people at home how much they needed to repent and turn to God, for they still had great punishment and great suffering far beyond anything that the exiles had to withstand.

70 years until judgment on Babylon: Desolate Forever [2:27]

Now, I asked you a second question in the assignment today, which the answer is not immediately obvious. I asked you if you learn anywhere from these passages when Babylon is to be destroyed, for we have two places that refer to God's judgment on Babylon in these chapters. In Chapter 25 we read in vs. 11-14, "This whole country will become a desolate wasteland and these nations will serve the king of Babylon 70 years. But when the 70 years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt, declares the Lord, and will make it desolate forever. I will rain on that land all the things that I've spoken against it. And all that are written in this book, and prophesied by Jeremiah, against all the nation. They themselves will be enslaved by many nations and great kings--I will repay them according to their deeds and the work of their hands."

Now, there's only one phrase in that passage that would specifically refer to destruction, and that is the words, "and will make it desolate forever." We are told here that for 70 more years all the nations will be subject to the Babylonians. In chapter 28 we read that after the 70 years the exiles will be allowed to return to their homes, but we don't learn anything there about the destruction of Babylon. Here we learn that Babylon is going to be punished; that God will punish the King and his nation and will make it desolate forever. Of course, you could from this conclusion prove that he will destroy

Babylon and make it desolate forever after 70 years. But that's not what it says. It says that he will bring the people home after 70 years. He says that he will punish the king and the land for their guilt after 70 years. That they will be enslaved by other nations. But it does not say when Babylon will be made desolate forever. That is not specifically said.

Now that's a tremendous thing to say about Babylon, that it will be desolate forever. And you can go there today and see the ruins of one of the greatest cities of the ancient world. Now you can see that the ruins of it and see how terribly desolate it has been made. But it does not say that that will occur immediately after the 70 years. Now that might suggest to you an interesting problem in translation because it says, "I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt, declares the Lord, and will make it desolate forever" (Jer. 25:12). Now, if you said, "And I will make it desolate forever," instead of, "I will make it desolate forever (no conjunction "and")," it might suggest to us a little more the possibility of a space in between. The Hebrew of course has the "I will" in the verse without "and." It's not specifically emphasized, and the fact of the matter was that after 70 years Babylon was conquered by the king of Persia. Part of the wall was knocked down, the people were subject to the king of Persia, but you remember that there was a king--whether it was Cyrus or one of his officers, a man who was called Darius--who had interaction with Daniel and who put Daniel in the lion's den against his will.

Persians and Later Greeks take Babylon [6:19]

The fact is, Babylon had not been destroyed when it was captured. It was quite an important city, the head of a large area. After that it was one of the important cities in the

Persian Empire for 200 years. And when the Persian Empire was destroyed 200 years later, the Greeks who conquered the Persian Empire under King Alexander the Great, Alexander desired to make Babylon the capital of his whole empire. He was expecting to conquer most of Europe, had the plans to go as far as Spain, and have this great empire with his capital in Babylon. But Alexander died suddenly.

About ten years after Alexander died one of his generals who had been ruling in Babylon and had been driven out came back and established himself in power there in Babylon. The date when he regained his power in Babylon was made the first date of a calendar that's ever been used--that we know of--to figure years right straight along past the reign of a king. As far back as we can go, we find dates being given to such and such a year of king so and so, but the dating starts fresh with a new king. But Seleucus started counting from the time he came to Babylon, and that was continued by many people for more than 1000 years counting from that time.

Seleucus who reigned in Babylon over the whole eastern part of what had been the Persian Empire, decided to build a new city 50 miles north of it, and he named it after himself. And he transferred the headquarters of the government to that city and did everything possible to make that a great city and have it take over what Babylon had been. He urged people to move to it. The result was that gradually over the next few decades Babylon became deserted, and so 300 years after Babylon fell the city began to be desolate, and it became an empty room and has remained so to this day. But as you see there is a gap, there is an interval there, of about 300 years between the first part of

the prophesy, which is definitely dated, and the last part which says and "will make it desolate forever."

Prophecy and Fulfillment Time Gaps [8:43]

I think it is a good warning to us where we have specific times given in Scripture. Do not think times necessarily go with what is immediately said in context, but realize there may be an interval before the next part of the prophecy. And also when we have two specific events predicted, do not take it for granted too readily that one event immediately follows the other. There may be a gap or an interval in between. This is demonstratively shown in this case. So I was interested in seeing how you would interpret that prophecy because it would not be at all unnatural to interpret that Babylon became desolate forever after 70 years, but as we see, that's not the way that the prophecy was fulfilled.

Jer 20:7 You [God] deceived me and God's Truth [10:11]

Now, last week I had asked you what problems you would find, and there were two basic problems that I wanted you to attend to in particular. And one or two said that in Jeremiah 20:7, that Jeremiah had spoken utter blasphemy saying that the Lord had deceived him. And indeed it would be so, if that's what is meant. So I was glad to see those who noticed this as a problem because at first sight it certainly is a problem. "Lord you have deceived me." God is a God of truth and God does not deceive anybody. God does not necessarily give us all the truth. It would take not a book the size of the Bible but many, many large encyclopedias to give us all the truth about any subject.

We don't know from the Bible all about ancient history--even the history of Israel.

We don't know all about the life of Jesus. John says at the end of his next to last chapter of his Gospel that if everything Jesus did was written in a book that all the books in the world would not be enough to contain all that he did. We are given only a selection of events. We don't have all of God's truth on any subject.

Our minds are not big enough to contain all of God's truth. He gives us the truth that is important for us to have. But what he gives us is truth, and the Bible is entirely true. We believe every word is true. But it has to be interpreted correctly of course. And one important thing about interpreting it is we have to see exactly what the words mean, but another is we have to be careful about reading into the words more meaning than what they encompass. And so in this case we noticed--and I think it's important to reiterate--that this word "deceived" is a rather deceptive translation in Jeremiah 20:7 because it gives us an impression that is not what the word "deceived" means as used today. Now, perhaps in the days of King James the word "deceived" carried a meaning different from today. I don't know if it did or didn't, but it's rather hard for me to believe that the translators of the Authorized Version would have used it if it meant what it means today. But the word does not mean to tell you something that is not true.

Not Deceived but to Induce a line of Action [13:22]

The word means "to induce you into a line of action." It means to lead you to take a certain course in what you do. And that is often a bad course of action, but not necessarily. The word means to bring pressure on you in some way to lead you into a certain line of activity. Everyone of us in our life is frequently led into courses of activity by other people even though they can't see the whole future and they don't know exactly

what is in store. They may be mistaken about what will happen or they may be intentionally trying to mislead us. And consequently the verb form of this word often carries the idea of intentionally misleading someone, but that is not inherently in the word. It is to bring you into a certain line of action, or a certain place, or something as a result of pressure from outside rather than of your sitting down and gathering all the data, and knowing all the facts and thus making a clear decision.

Of course, it is true that the great many decisions we make in life, in fact most of them, we don't have all the data. And, therefore, certain forces enter in, and when you're dealing with others and trying to help them, very often you try to go through the whole course of a thing and to explain all the factors and to give them a clear understanding of why a certain course is best; but there are many, many times when you just don't have the time to do that sort of thing. You are convinced of what is best, and you try to propel a person in that direction. You try to induce them to do something. And I trust that with every one of us when you do so, it will be to induce them into something that is for their good and for their best. But the word *induce* does not necessarily convey what you get into is good or not good.

Jeremiah Facing Difficult Circumstances [15:35]

And so what Jeremiah says here has been translated in various ways. The word "deceived" today gives quite a false impression. As a correct translation today, you might say, "Lord, you have impelled me; you overpowered me and you prevailed." God said to Jeremiah, "I have selected you from before your birth." He said, "You are to be my messenger, you are to do a great work for me. I will protect you through it," and God

protected Jeremiah most wonderfully as we know. God said this to Jeremiah, but he was also in situations which would be very, very difficult for a person to face. And when we get into a difficult situation, and we got into it because some human being impelled us toward it, we naturally have a tendency to feel very critical of that human being. Even though later, as we look back, we might decide they did it for our best, after all, or the best they knew. But when we get into a situation because of circumstances completely beyond our control but we were truly looking to the Lord to lead us, we can know that God has a purpose in it. And it was His purpose that got us into a difficult situation, even though we might not have had the strength to make the decision had we realized what it would lead to. And so the translation of the word there is quite unfortunate.

Now, the NIV still uses "deceived," but it has a footnote for "persuasion." And, of course, "persuasion" isn't quite right either because "persuade" has mostly the idea--in modern English--that by logical argument we get someone to do something, and while that may be part of what the word means, that's only a part. You have the result of what God did toward Jeremiah. He lead him into a situation which Jeremiah couldn't with his finite human strength have chosen, but into what I'm sure he looked back at later on and praised God for having led him into it.

Curses the Day of His Birth (Jer 20:17-18) [17:54]

Then we also have the big problem which most of you felt, I believe, when Jeremiah said, "Cursed be the day I was born" and the terrible way that he expressed himself with "Why did I ever come out of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and to end my days in shame." (Jeremiah 20:17-18). The terrible, miserable feeling that he

expresses is there, even putting the curse on the man who brought the news to his father, that he was born in terrible declaration of misery.

We have a very similar statement in Job 3. One statement of the problem one asks is whether Jeremiah got his feeling from Job or Job from Jeremiah. We don't know; we have no reason to think one got it from the other, but it is all together possible that that was, at that time, a rather common way of expressing great sorrow. We don't know. But while the two are quite similar, I don't think we have to think that either of them was based upon the other.

Now, when you put together his statement as if God had put him in this situation, and he feels miserable about it, and when you take the strong language he uses there, and when you take the strong language he uses of calling on the Lord to punish his persecutors; and when you take the strong language here of his cursing the day he was born, we indeed have a very definite problem.

Jer 15:19 Not the Answer: Jeremiah Not Wrong [19:29]

I know of some of you who explained the problem by going back to chapter 15. And there in verse 19 we read, "And, therefore this is what 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 spokesman. Let this people turn to you but you must not turn to them.'" Those who go back to Jeremiah 15 are saying that God there is rebuking Jeremiah for these things, but I would say that if that immediately followed these statements of despair, that would be perhaps a valid way of solving the problem, but God's response does not immediately follow Jeremiah's complaint. It was four chapters earlier and there is

nothing to connect the two.

It is a general statement of God's that Jeremiah not give in to his feelings of misery in the situation he finds himself and that he be careful to serve effectively. But if you take chapter 15 as rebuking Jeremiah for what is included five chapters later in the Scripture, it seems to me this is very dangerous. It would leave us in the position where we could take almost any part of the Scripture and say, "Well, here the writer made a mistake; he put down what he shouldn't have." And I don't believe we should do that. I think we have to feel that what Jeremiah said is indeed a definite part of the Lord God's word and that it is meant for our good. If God had said Jeremiah gave way to this terrible thing and God rebuked him for giving way, that would be one thing. But it doesn't say anything like that in connection with these statements that he made.

Jeremiah Expressing Depression and Discouragement in Ministry [21:29]

So I think in both cases it is an expression, in the terminology which was common at that time, of one's very great distress and depression. And I doubt if you will find many who have served the Lord in a great and effective way who haven't at times had periods of great depression. Times when they almost said, "Oh, how can I go on; it's utterly impossible," they've just given way to depression and misery. I think you'll find depression comes at times to most people whom God has greatly blessed, who have greatly been used by God. A person who just goes along in a clear, calm way is very rare. The person that has the power to move, the power to help others and to be a great influence, is often the one who is subject himself to great emotional strains.

I believe that the expression of these emotional strains may be perhaps rather

extreme. But they are a recognition of the fact that working for the Lord can, at times, be depressing and that is something that God wants us to be aware of and to realize that if we are going as God is leading us, if we're doing what he wants us to do that when we get into a situation like Jeremiah's, we should look to God for bringing us out of it and go on. Knowing that if it is His will that we go on in this way, he will bless us; but if it should be his will that we die like Uriah did (Jer. 26:23), when God protected Jeremiah but did not protect Uriah, it would be his will that we honor God by courageously suffering for his sake, and we should praise God for enabling us to do that.

I am sure that you will find that almost every minister that God has used has some time in his life said something like, "All these troubles people are bringing to me; all these people that I work with for hours and hours, yet they have accomplished nothing." He so easily forgets the people for whom he solved problems and changed their lives; he only thinks of his failures. He thinks of miseries he goes through, and then he sees someone else for whom everything seems to be just smooth in front of them, and he says, "I think I've done enough for the Lord now; I think I'll go sell insurance, make some money and enter into a secular life." I'm not saying at all that it's wrong for a man to be in a secular life. God uses people in secular life. There may even be those who take a full seminary course and go on in a secular occupation the rest of their life, and God uses them greatly in Sunday School teaching and in contacts with other people. I know of individuals like that who have accomplished more than a great many ministers ever do. But if God has lead you to feel that He wants your life to be especially devoted to serving Him, you will have periods of depression, but I think He wants you to learn to look to

Him as Jeremiah did here in the verse in the last part of chapter 20 where he alternates between expressions of rejoicing in what God has done and expressions of the misery he's passing through. But He wants you to know that these times will pass. And if you're truly called of the Lord, He will lead you out into a path of brightness after going through that situation.

God's Grief [24:54]

I am trying to show that we must be careful to be balanced in our idea of God. God is not like a wooden carved statue, like something that stands there and looks a certain way and never moves. God is unchangeable in his attributes. But God is a person. And a person has emotions. God rejoices, and there is rejoicing in heaven over a sinner that is saved. God rejoices when we do what is right; when we turn to him; when we follow him. When we fail, I think God is sorrowful. I think it grieves God's heart when we fail to follow him as we should. I am inclined to feel that the interpretation of this in the case of Jeremiah is that we are given the different aspect of his life, and that God caused it to be included in Jeremiah's writing not only to give us a picture of Jeremiah's life, but to show us that God--who spoke through Jeremiah--Himself experiences great emotion of sorrow when we fail to do what we should. He experiences misery over the way of people whom He has called turn against Him, but a great joy when we go on and set our face like a flint, like Jesus did to go to Jerusalem, and learn to serve him effectively.

Jeremiah and Jesus both Denounce Sin [26:15]

Now, so much then for this matter, for there were a number that turned in a number of problems of the relationship of one verse to another, or a certain statement here or there that were very interesting problems. While I was very much interested to see what you considered to be problems, I don't think I ought to take the class time with some of those that only one person mentioned. I may be able to touch on them sometime later, or I may possibly speak to you or write you personally about them.

I have a list of the problems that struck me as interesting ones that were presented in connection with last time. And last time I did say a word about the comparison of Jeremiah and Jesus. And I think that is vital. As we look at these statements by Jeremiah--calling on God to punish these wicked people, and sorrowfully wishing that he had never been born, and his strong denunciation against sin--it is easy for us to think that his character is utterly different from that of Jesus the Savior.

I got a letter once from a man whom I had met and was well impressed by his Christian testimony. In the letter he said, "I just heard a man over the radio giving a talk on the Old Testament showing a God of vengeance, and that is not the God I believe in at all; He's not the God of mercy of the New Testament." I don't think it is right to put the New Testament against the Old Testament in that way. We can compare Jeremiah or anybody who ever lived with the divine son of God, and we'll find that Jesus was infinitely superior to all.

But yet, it is a fact that there are both sides. There is God's denunciation of sin; there is God's showing the terrible consequences for those who turn against God. That is

a clear factor in the Old Testament greatly stressed, but the Old Testament also greatly stresses God's mercy, His wonderful blessing towards those who truly believe, who truly believe and follow Him. We have the marvelous blessings in the Old Testament which we have the right to claim for ourselves. And on the other hand, in the sayings of Jesus, we find some of the strongest refutations of those who do what is wicked. I listed this morning over 20 different passages in which Jesus spoke of hypocrites those who close up the doors, who don't enter the kingdom of God themselves but shut the doors for others. And he speaks very strongly. The strongest statements about hell anywhere in the Bible are by our Lord. As, for instance, where he says that it is better to go into heaven maimed without an eye or without a hand than to go into hell with all. He says, "if your eye deceives you, pluck it out" (cf. Matt. 18:7ff.). He delivers strong denunciations of sin and of wickedness. In spite of the condemnations, we have Jesus saying, "Oh, Jerusalem, how I wanted to take you under my wings like a hen does her chickens but you would not," and then he says how terrible it is going to be for them. He says, "It would be better for Sodom and Gomorrah than it will be for you." He shows his great love and sympathy for the people and we find many things in the book of Jeremiah that show similar feelings on Jeremiah's part. And, of course, we have the whole book of Lamentations in which he laments over the punishment that had come for Judah's sin.

Pashhur the Priest and His Fate (Jer 20) [30:00]

In chapter 20 of Jeremiah we looked at this last part particularly, but we it did not say anything about the first part of the chapter. And I believe we should say just a word about that particularly because one of the papers asked whether there was a contradiction

in the first part of it. There it speaks about the fate of the priest Pashhur and says this priest is going to die and be buried in Babylon. What a terrible fate (Jer. 20:6). He was going to die and be buried, but he's going to see his friends killed. I think we need to look at that just a little bit to see that though that might seem to be an easy interpretation of what we read, I think what it really means is a little different.

Pashhur in chapter 20 is the chief officer of the temple. When he heard Jeremiah prophesying these things he had him beaten and put in the stock. When Pashhur released him from the stocks Jeremiah said to him, "The Lord's name for you is not Pashhur but Magor-Missabib, [which means fear, or terror, on every side.] For this is what the Lord says, 'I will make you a terror.'" That means a cause of fear. It does not mean that fear would be from him; but that there will be fear all around him. "For to you and to all your friends with your own eyes you will see them fall by the sword of their enemies. I will hand all Judah over to the king of Babylon who will carry them over to Babylon or will put them to the sword. I will hand over to their enemies all the wealth of the city. They will carry it away from this city and carry it off to Babylon and you, Pashhur, and all who live in your house will go into exile in Babylon. There you will die and be buried, you and all your friends to whom you have prophesied lies" (Jer. 20:4-6).

Now this "all your friends" doesn't mean all his friends are going to be carried off into exile because he says just before many will be killed. But those who are not killed--the rest of them--will be carried off to Babylon. So the contrast here is between the people that Pashhur will have to see being killed around him and the experience he

personally will have of being carried off a prisoner to Babylon and of spending the rest of his life in exile.

Pashhur's Punishment [32:32]

Some people would say this sounds as if Pashhur is better treated than the people around him. It's supposed to be a rebuke against Pashhur, but what it says is the other people are going to be killed, and Pashhur isn't. But I think, on a little thought, we will reach the conclusion that Pashhur is the one who suffers most because he will see many of his good friends killed in the conquest of the city. Jeremiah says he will see this, but these people have a little suffering and they're dead; they're gone. But Pashhur will be carried off into exile with his friends. He will have the suffering of that to go through and then he will die in a foreign land. He will never see his own home again. So it isn't saying, "You're going to die and be buried;" its saying, "You're going to be carried off into exile and never be able to come back."

There's a general idea today that the worst thing you can do to anybody is to kill them, but I think there are many people who would rather have capital punishment than to spend the rest of their lives locked up somewhere. Of course, you now know that today when they say a life sentence, I think it only means 18 years. So there's always the hope of getting out afterwards. But the contrast here is an interesting contrast in that the worst punishment is given to Pashhur than what the others are going to have. Yet also there is the additional thing in this verse, in this prediction that Jeremiah here is permitted of the Lord to make namely, a precise prediction about the fact that this man Pashhur is not going to be killed in the conflict. This is a further evidence that Jeremiah actually

spoke from the Lord. When the exiles see a few years later the way that the Babylonian soldiers came through killing many of Pashhur's friends right before his eyes and that Pashhur escapes being killed and is carried off in chains to Babylon, surely he and his friends would say, "But look; Jeremiah predicted exactly this fact." And so what had happened was further evidence that God had actually spoken through the prophet Jeremiah.

Chapters 1-20 and the Unity of the Book [34:43]

Now, I have given you an outline of a certain section of the early part of the book that I labeled 1, 2, and 3. I made them rather hastily. The real importance of them is not that they are sharp divisions, but that they are made at points of transition, and I have selected them fairly hastily. I did that through the whole of the book up to this point. But I don't know whether we'll have time to do the rest of Jeremiah because we have so much of the book to look at.

So at this time I want to mention the fact that at this time these first twenty chapters, I think, can well be considered as the first main section of the book; that these twenty chapters, which is more than a third of the book, differ in some rather striking ways from the rest of the book. So I think you can put the whole twenty chapters into the first main section. They are made up largely of general rebuke to God's disobedient people with glimpses of Jeremiah's personal feeling. It is most likely that the material in these first twenty chapters, most of it, was during the time of Josiah, or during the time of Jehoiakim; that is most likely. We cannot say for certain, but I would think that probably some of it was given on more than one occasion, and some part of the first chapter may

have been repeated at several times. In fact we know that Jeremiah wrote a scroll with a great deal of material in it which Jehoiakim destroyed, and then it says he dictated it again with adding other words, and so we don't know for sure when all of the book was given, but it could very well all have been given, as far as anything I've noticed, during the time of Josiah, and at least during that of Jehoiakim, at least everything up to here.

Now, we have very little up to here about any king of the land; he is probably not so prominent. Jeremiah not dealing with kings in the first twenty chapters; he's dealing with the people as a whole.

Chapters one through twenty form a definite group within the book. We have not put all our time on them up till now by any means because I've given you a good many assignments in later chapters. But we have spent a fair amount of time on these chapters and know their general nature.

Jeremiah and Symbolic Acts [37:08]

Now, there are other matters later on that are quite important that we will get into, but there is one specific thing about these chapters that I think we ought to know. In these chapters, during the first twelve chapters largely, he has been rebuking the people for their sin giving the messages we have discussed. Then we find starting with chapter thirteen a number of cases where he used symbolic action to convey a meaning. We find something very similar to this in the book of Ezekiel. Ezekiel spoke to the people in exile and rebuked them for their sin, but then I believe the time came when they wouldn't listen to him anymore, and then Ezekiel stopped speaking and instead performed certain actions which aroused people's curiosity. Then he explained what the symbols meant,

and that way he got them to pay attention. Well, Jeremiah did not have it that bad, but it did reach the point where perhaps the people were saying, "Oh, we've heard all that before; that's the way he's talking all the time," so Jeremiah gives a few of these symbolic actions.

Linen Belt (Jer 13) [38:15]

The first of these symbolic acts is in chapter thirteen. In chapter thirteen, verses one to seven, we have an account of Jeremiah's buying a linen belt and putting it around his waist and then taking it and going and hiding it among a crevasse in the rocks beside a river and leaving it there a time, and then coming back and finding it all ruined and decayed. Holding it up he says, "This is what the LORD says, 'In the same way I will ruin the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem.'" And people who had gotten tired of listening to him, now they see him holding this thing up and they're saying, "What's he up to now?" And he arouses their interest by this symbolic action.

Potter's House (Jer 18) [39:03]

Then in chapter eighteen we find that the Lord said to him, "Go down to the potter's house and I'll give you a message," and he went to the potter's house and he saw the potter working on a wheel. The pot he was shaping was marred in his hands, so the potter formed it into a different pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. The word of the Lord said, "'O the house of Israel can I not do with you as this potter does,' declares the LORD, 'like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel.'"

Another lesson from chapter 18 is this: If the nation thinks God is going to uproot it, tear it down and destroy it, and then if that nation repents of its evil, God has mercy on

them. No one has the right to say, "I am lost; God has created me for perdition; that's the end of me, it's hopeless." As long as we are living, God has mercy and God is ready if we turn to Him.

But on the other hand, if you go out and then you say, "Well, the Bible says I am saved; I can live the way I feel like" and you fall into sin, well, we question whether you were truly saved when that happened, but it is a warning for us to follow on through our lives and on God's will for us, and to know that no matter how deeply someone has fallen into sin, God may enable us to lead them to the Lord, and God will give him marvelous salvation. No matter what a fine upright life a person seems to be living, and how many verses he can quote and so on, if he falls into sin, it may be that all the words he said did not represent a true heart belief.

In other words, we have to keep our eyes on the Lord all the time. We are like Peter who could walk on the waves as long as he kept his eyes on Christ, but he turned his eyes away and he began to sink. And while we are saved--we are saved for all eternity--yet in our Christian life we have to keep our eyes on the Lord. As far as someone else goes, we can't trust too much in their words for, we don't know how deep their words go within them. Some can say the most beautiful words and are hypocrites, and others who can't express their faith very well truly belong to Christ. But Jeremiah says, don't put too much confidence in mere words. God wants you to keep your eyes on Him all the way through. And so he gives us this picture of the potter in these two ways here.

Potter's House Revisited (Jer 19) [41:42]

Then in chapter nineteen he uses the potter in still a third way. He says, "Go and buy a clay jar from a potter," and Jeremiah goes out carrying this clay jar, and people see him going and they say, "What's he up to now?" So they see him carrying this beautiful pot that he bought from the potter and they say, "O my word, where's he going with this?" And he goes and then he says to the people, "This is what the LORD says, 'I'm going to bring disasters on this place that will make the ears of everyone who hears it tingle, in this place I will ruin the plans of Judah and Jerusalem.'" And God says, "Break the jar while those who go with you are watching, and say, '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.'""

God shows here that there are various ways of getting the truth across and He wants us to seek the ways to get the truth into people's hearts; and not to feel we have to simply go through the same forms and ceremonies that are using the same words, but to look for the ways that He will use to get the truth across.

Edited and narrated by Dr. Perry Phillips
Initial editing by Ted Hildebrandt
Transcribed by Ken Poehler