

A good man down

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- [0 : 00] Now shall we turn to Jeremiah in chapter 15. And perhaps we might look at this chapter and I want to look at one thing perhaps that we find in this chapter.
- Right throughout Jeremiah as we've looked through it, Jeremiah has been a very lonely man. A very lonely man. His message was not accepted.
- His prophetic power was put aside by those that were his equals.
- And right throughout the whole of the chapters that we've looked at, it's the story of a man that's against the crowd.
- But sometimes when you go against the crowd, sometimes it can affect you. And in this chapter, I'm very, very glad to see it.
- [1 : 24] It's really, in this chapter, we see a giant of God tasting defeat.
- In this chapter, we see the strong man of God, so weak.
- So weak that he questioned God himself. And that is the road almost to atheism.
- Yet we're glad for this chapter because it can help us.
- It reveals the doubts, the fears, and the disappointments which harass the prophet of God.
- [2 : 23] He seems to be so certain. He seems so strong with his message.
- And it's a frightening message, as you know. And yet we'll find in this chapter, we see his doubts and his fears and his disappointments.
- And we will see also his defeat and his shame. It tells us that all of us are weak at our strongest part.
- Sometimes when I'm preaching, I often think that I'm preaching sometimes to certain people in the congregation who are not converted, but who are in some ways maybe nicer than myself.
- And it's very difficult to be honest when you deal with people that you love and care for.
- [3 : 39] Sometimes after when I've preached the gospel, I've also felt that I've almost nullified it. Sometimes when I'm going out the door, trying to love the people after I've said the message.
- And sometimes it's very difficult to preach the truth. But let's come out the truth. I've heard about Jeremiah. And something like this. What he does in this chapter is he takes us into the secret of his own soul.
- The secret of his own soul. He takes us into them, into it. He opens his heart to let us see his own need, his own battle, his own defeat.

he permits us to view the inner sight inside his own heart and he sees us to see himself at the brink of despair you might say a prophet of God like that you see this man had been told by God right throughout these chapters he'd been told by God never to show any sign of fear before his enemies not once did he ever break down before them not once before his fellow men did he show any doubt of God's mercy of God's grace of God's wisdom of God's holiness God's justice and God's wisdom he never once showed any doubt before the people but when you go to this chapter you find out that he seems to have at times doubted himself this chapter tells us that he seems to have doubted himself to speak sometimes in the 1 and 17 you'll find that he uses these words he has to gird up his line the message is frightening he also had to fight against his worst enemy his own flesh and blood there was something inside him that was antagonistic against the very message that he had are you ever like that as a Christian you just don't know God you don't know why God is doing it you have to do it because it's God we find that in this chapter here that he inclined to doubt God and his word and his willingness and just keeping his promises yet he fought that battle in solitude alone with his God whom he poured out his own fear to his own God he poured out his fears to his God that he didn't know him and he couldn't understand them and that he had a message that in a sense he didn't want and he pours it out his inner fears and his disappointments and his despair until he breaks down completely in chapter 17 when he says of himself and he says of everything or everyone else he says the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked who can do it now then in this chapter his faithful God is with him he's with him in these dark dismal times when he's

grieving in this chapter you'll see God doing four things first of all he will comfort Jeremiah then he will warn him you'll find that then he'll strengthen him and then he'll assure him that what he said is truth now despite the battles of the flesh and his controversy with God ultimately he rises by the grace of God and he will yet going to find worse problems in his ministry and having come through this one he'll be able to meet the other one it's wonderful for God when he will take you through the one which seems frightening to give you strength for the one that's going to come in the future when you come into this chapter you'll find

[10:02] Jeremiah being very ordinary he has prayed for Israel and God says at the beginning of the chapter as we've noticed before he says though Moses and Samuel stood before me the great intercessors he says I won't change my mind and that seems in a sense to Jeremiah it seems almost to break him you see the state of his people when he preaches it doesn't make him feel arrogant he feels for the people and you know I find this frightening sometimes when you preach the gospel you preach the judgment of God what's going to come when you look ahead and you see all your friends some of them going to be lost young boys maybe maybe in a car crash a week's time and they're dead and I know the boys might not be trusting the Lord

Jesus and then adults are taken away quickly and it doesn't give any pleasure to say you're lost it doesn't make you feel arrogant because you say that neither was Jeremiah the state of his people pained him it hurt him he wasn't arrogant to say I know the truth I've got it it's not like that the state of his people strangely seem to leave him in despair can I tell you something when you look into hell as a minister you almost don't want to believe in God for that's the truth when you see the frighteningness of the future like Jeremiah there for Israel because God is righteous and we we don't know how holy he is and the only emblem that we have of it that can give just a simple illustration is when he crucifies his son not only his soldiers he was also crucified in one sense by God his father and the state of the people seem to leave

Jeremiah in despair and the state of his people seem to cause him to challenge God why God why God why God and that's these are the questions that people ask and Jeremiah knew a difference from the rest but more than that he was tired he was weary to be the odd man out it is in verse 10 woe is me my mother that you bore me a man of strife and of contention to all the earth I've neither lent for interest and I had no one lent me for interest and yet everyone curses me and Jeremiah had a heart he was tired he was warned and sometimes in the ministry you get tired and you get warned and as a

Christian you can get tired and warned just the same as Jeremiah you see there are two things here he says I'm a man of strife and contention I'm always causing trouble everywhere you know Christians get to cause people everywhere trouble sometimes when they start speaking about God's word and yet there are two things of Jeremiah here he's unjustly misunderstood he's unjustly misunderstood a man of strife and contention that's misunderstood and then he's unjustly maligned everyone curses me you see there's a picture in all this you see

Jeremiah I'm sure he wanted to have a message of peace instead of warning and yet there was a message of peace at God's challenge at God's cost and at God's demands he wanted a message of peace that everything's going to go well the nation is going to overcome Israel but God's message was that Israel was going to be overcome by another nation and go into captivity like Egypt that wasn't nice to him instead of warning and frightening this with people he wanted to have peace to tell them that God is on their side then at that moment he becomes in a sense in this chapter dissatisfied with his calling and his life there's a dissatisfaction with it he doesn't want to be a peace disturber he doesn't want to be a self elected critic he doesn't want to be a judge of his own people no we see at that point the first elements of imperfection he says to me in this chapter woe is me have you got it woe is me that's what we said there woe is me my mother that you bore me a man of strife you know what he's starting to do now what we often do he's starting out to consider himself he's having his eyes on himself not as

[16 : 56] God and not as message he's looking at himself when you start doing that whether you're a prophet or a humble child of God you're in trouble when you take your eyes into yourself you can see also frighteningly so he takes his eyes of God and he took his eyes of God message that's the first thing that he did yet at that point at that point we find it in verse 11 at that very point when he's feeling like that God comes to him at once he says to him he says Jeremiah surely I will deliver you and I will deliver you for a good purpose he says surely I will make in verse 11 I will make your enemies yet plead with you in times of disaster and in distress he says

Jeremiah they're turning against you now but there's going to come a day when they're going to come to you and they're going to come to you for help can he believe it can he believe it later publicly as a as God's prophet during the 20 70 years of captivity it came to pass but he had to wait to get that order and during that time between that time he had to be denounced by the prophets but God gave him an assurance at the very point when he was beginning to fail people now then not only did God say that he was going to judge the people through different judgments four different lots of them a quarter of them would go to

Babylon but he said this he says you're going to be down there and when you're down there they're going to come back to you they're going to know that you're a prophet that's what God came to him at that very time the beginning when he started looking to himself rather than God in verses 12 to 14 God does something again he confirms his message of coming judgment there's no doubt about that no doubt how we ever can get away from heaven above and hell beneath and only across to save a man it's always the message now then God confirms the coming judgment he's not saying to Jeremiah well

I'm going to change my mind he's asking him to look away from himself to him and to his promises and his message and yet Jeremiah seems to be niggled by doubt Jeremiah seems at this time even when God has spoken to him he's tired of the battle he's desiring to give it up and I think that doubt is entering in like a mist into his soul but you know when God spoke to him there immediately Jeremiah sort of backs up do you ever see yourself backing up when something can happen and he says he looks to God and he says in verse 15 and 16 he submits himself to

God's judgments who am I to oppose your determination remember me and visit me care for me Jeremiah fears in one sense that God if God doesn't do something in a sense with his persecutors they'll get him he says don't let them get away don't you know he says to God again he's moaning he says don't you know that for your name's sake I've suffered as if God didn't know as if God couldn't act you see doubt is coming through over and over again in verse 16 he looks back he reminds himself I think and he reminds God of the joy that he once experienced the joy he had with contact with God and he's almost saying was it real oh he says no he says your words came to me and I ate them your words were to me the rejoicing of my heart he looks to that time when he had a felt experience of God he knew he could look back and he could know spiritual reality he could see in the past joyous abundance total assurance he was almost looking back through this mist and then he recalls in verse 17 he says

[23 : 02] I did not sit in the assembly of mockers I wasn't in the camp of the revelers I never made merry with them he says God I was separated I sat alone because your hand was upon me I was alone and separation was real for him now all of a sudden his feelings change his feelings change how quickly it is to come from the heights down to the depths in Christian experience and in verse 18 he comes back in again and he's got another question he's got another question one of his why questions he's got four of them before that in this 15 verses but this is the fifth one he says why is my pain perpetual why is my pain an ending and my wound is incurable he's telling what he's feeling inside he's he's inside he's got a he's got a pain a spiritual pain he says why have I got why am I feeling like this if you're my God why am I feeling like this if I know your word why am I feeling like this maybe a fear maybe doubt why that's the fifth time he said why in this thing

God God never asks her why very often remember in verse one he says why does the way of the wicked prosper are you really there God why are you letting this happen that's the first why in 1480 he says why should you be a stranger in the land you're our covenant God why don't you do something 49 why should you be like a man it's taken by surprise by the condition of Israel why are you surprised and then 14 and 9 he says why have you stricken me questions they're all there you see at time past he could not understand why God had forsook

Israel and now it seems that he's wondering himself whether he's right at all and whether maybe God will forsake him and he preached only he says God's word the only reward that he got for preaching the truth was hatred and persecution he falls from joy to gloom and despair verse 18 he reaches the end of the darkness do you know what he does in verse 15 he turns to God and he says God you're a liar strange thing from a prophet you're a liar he charges God for being a liar verse 18 this is what he says you God are to me like an unreliable stream you promised and you don't fulfill streams waters that fail it's called that's what

Micah calls it as well waters that fail streams that run dry in the summer when water is needed now this is the language of unbelief Jeremiah's flesh not a spiritual part but his flesh is speaking here and he's speaking always like the flesh wherever it is it's always enmity against God even when it's in a Christian he's saying to God first of all he's saying you've not kept your word he says you're not trustworthy you're a fraud you don't even exist that's a prophet of God telling you what's going on inside his soul between the flesh and the spirit he's putting it down he charges

God being a liar and at that moment in this chapter he broke down because his trust in God was fast disintegrating and so Satan had been successful in seducing God's chosen servant into doubt belief despair and blasphemy church you say well why why does the bible tell these things because it happened because when it happens to you or it happens to me I know that there are some people in church now let me tell that person whoever they are I know you can look around and you can look at the church and you can look at believers and you can say look at that look at that person look at that person you can start with me and if you got right you would be pretty right anyway right look at that how can that really person be a

[29 : 34] Christian see the bible never tells you that a Christian is perfect the bible tells you that there is a fight against evil outside and inside there's defeat in the human heart and if a person can look down on others and self righteous and say I'm not like that I doubt that person could be a Christian it's the language of unbelief no this prophet is very honest he said well what will God do with him no that's how he's feeling and in verse 19 you find this and this is God speaking to Jeremiah God does not excuse

Jeremiah and he doesn't give him special treatment listen to what it says in verse 19 thus saith the Lord to Jeremiah who's told them told them what he thinks of him thus saith the Lord the Lord is the Lord of unjusting justice unchanging justice the Lord is no respecter of any person not even Jeremiah Moses found this and he didn't get into the promised land David found this when he was judged and he wasn't allowed to make the temple so God is not making a special treatment for Jeremiah Jeremiah is told this now listen to this carefully he's told that he must repent therefore saith the

Lord verse 19 if you return if you return and I will bring you again right in other words he had to repent of the sin that he that he saw that he confessed before God that he brought to God he's got to repent and God says if you don't repent you will be demissed or dismissed from your office if you repent I will restore you I'll turn you back in order to retain God's spokesmanship his prophet office itself he must repent and turn from the way of doubt to trust trust and that is an indispensable condition

Jeremiah has got to do what you and I have got to do what they've done right down through the ages when you find sin in any form when you find it in your heart you have to repent you can't accuse God you repent you recognize it for what it is that's what the Bible tells us and Jeremiah is told if you repent I'll restore you and then you will stand before me you see it's the same message if you teach the godly to come forth from the ungodly to take the vile out of the good get rid of it God will answer your question why no he won't he won't even answer the question why he does things even though you ask him he will just ask you to do what is right and when

Jeremiah does that God says this he confirms him he says I will deliver you despite the opposition I don't say that there won't be conflict but I tell you this there is conflict I will deliver you despite the opposition I will deliver you despite the conflict I will give you ultimate victory that's what he says at the end I will redeem you now my friend at that chapter Jeremiah learns his lesson and he goes back to God and he says oh God I'm sorry but are you not thankful that he opened up to show what he was like so that you could be helped that's the message message of salvation is this we trust

[35 : 12] Christ to save us we trust the Holy Spirit to come into us to direct us we have the word of God that we must believe for our direction when there are things in the word of God that we don't understand if there are problems that come into our heart there is one verse over the scriptures I leave it with you shall not the judge of all the earth do right even Jeremiah went into the mists and he tells us of what happened shall we pray we ask you God to teach us from your word may we be thankful that Jeremiah tells the truth and we thank you that afterwards what you promised fulfilled itself the armies came history tells us

Jerusalem Jerusalem was overcome the people were taken to Babylon and Jeremiah and there he was recognized as the true prophet of God afterwards help us to rest in your word and rest in your son as our saviour and your word as our instruction we pray you Lord anyone has come through the mists of doubt help them to see that there is a flesh within every child of God that would deny God that would rebuke God that would stand against God enmity yet we thank you that your children have been given a new principle to fight that and the

Holy Spirit to comfort and help them and the word of God to depend upon may we go by this way of faith for Jesus sake Amen Amen