

Series: *Learning from the Lamentor: Living By Faith When Times Are Hard*

Main Idea: Like Jeremiah in Jeremiah 32, if we really believe the Lord, it shows, and it shows in four ways.

- I. We show we believe the Lord through our preaching (1-5).
 - A. Jeremiah paid a price for the message he preached (1-2).
 - B. Jeremiah said exactly what the Lord told him to say, even though it sounded unpatriotic (3-5).
- II. We show we believe the Lord through our spending (6-15).
 - A. The Lord told Jeremiah to buy a field (6-7).
 - B. Jeremiah bought the field even though he would never enjoy it (8-15).
 1. He spent his money in submission to the Word of God.
 2. He spent his money with the future in mind.
 3. He spent his money to bring honor to the One who gave it to him.
- III. We show we believe the Lord through our praying (16-25).
 - A. Jeremiah brought his praise to the Lord (16-23).
 1. He called attention to His power (17).
 2. He called attention to His loving involvement in people’s lives (18-19).
 3. He called attention to His past work in redemption (20-22).
 4. He called attention to His present work in bringing destruction (23).
 - B. Jeremiah brought his predicament to the Lord (24-25).
 1. We’re about to lose our country.
 2. You told me to buy a field.
- IV. We show we believe the Lord through our listening (26-44).
 - A. The Lord announced that He was going to judge His people (26-35).
 1. He clarified how it would happen (27-29).
 2. He clarified why it would happen (30-35).
 - B. The Lord announced that He was going to restore His people (36-44).
 1. I’m going to restore them to this land (37).
 2. I’m going to restore them to Me (38).
 3. I’m going to restore them to My ways (39-41).
 4. I’m going to restore them to prosperity (42-44).

Make It Personal: Two questions in light of Jeremiah’s example...

1. How am I treating the word of the Lord?
2. What is the Lord asking me to do today to show that I really believe Him?

What’s next? We have finished our summer series, *Redeemed People Pray the Word*, digesting the prayers of Paul. And we’re hoping to launch our fall series on September 20 by returning to Hebrews 7. But for the next four weeks I’d like us to fix our gaze on a timely, often neglected biblical character. I have found this man to be a great mentor in my life. Frankly, he was quite *unsuccessful* at least in terms of how success is often defined these days. His peers did not approve of him and in fact hated him. But God approved of him. Why? Because he did exactly what God called him to do in the most difficult of times.

Our series is entitled, “*Learning from the Lamentor: Living By Faith When Times Are Hard*.” The Lamentor is Jeremiah, a man who lived by faith, not sight, and did so during the toughest of times. And there’s so much we can learn from him as we seek to navigate the challenging times in which we live.

“Now these things happened to them as an example,” said Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:11, “but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has

^{**}Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For a previous look at messages from the life of Jeremiah, see the WBC series in 2010.

come.” We need the Old Testament stories for many reasons, including this one. We need *examples*.

The book of Jeremiah is a big book (fifty-two chapters), indeed the biggest book in the Bible by word count (33,002 words in the Hebrew; Genesis has 32,046 and Psalms 30,147). For this series I’ve chosen four passages from the book of Jeremiah. We’ll be looking at one from the end of his ministry (chapter 32), another that he wrote at the beginning (chapter 1), a third that he penned in the middle (chapter 18), and a fourth in which he summarizes the promises of God that enabled him to persevere (chapter 31).

I want us to know what made Jeremiah tick for I want us to glorify God as he did. To begin our expositional pondering, I want us to explore a most intriguing event in Jeremiah 32. The year is 587 BC. If you know your history, you’ll recognize that it’s just months away from the fall of Jerusalem. The capital city is under siege and food is scarce. Jeremiah is in prison with the charge of treason hanging over his head. And what did he do next? *He bought a field from his cousin.*

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 32:6-15

Easy believism is a huge problem in America. It’s in Wheelersburg and countless communities like ours which are filled with people who say they believe in Jesus, yet there seems to be very little connection between their Sunday beliefs and their Thursday behavior. Easy-believism is so prevalent today that many presume that it’s acceptable. We’ve even created labels to justify it. “Oh, he’s just *backslidden*.” Or, “she’s a *carnal* Christian.”

Jesus didn’t allow for easy-believism, but condemned it (see Matthew 7:22-27). But our purpose this morning isn’t to confront the problem of easy-believism. Just the opposite. I want us to ponder the beauty of a vibrant living faith.

Jeremiah ministered during one of the most difficult situations ever faced by a man of God. He not only watched his country slide into a spiritual cesspool, but he had to tell them that as a consequence of their unrepentant sin, God’s judgment was coming. To make it worse, he himself had to endure the judgment when it came. And yet he didn’t just endure it, but actually ministered to his hurting countrymen by writing lamentations to help them grieve properly, through confession, repentance, and returning to the Lord.

When I’m hurting, my tendency is to turn inward and become self-absorbed. Not Jeremiah. He turned upward and outward out of his love for God and his people. He demonstrated a *living faith*.

I want that, don’t you? I want to know what made Jeremiah tick, and I want that in my life and yours. To find out what made him tick, we are going back into the book that bears his name. It’s in the book of Jeremiah that we find a window into the soul of this amazing man of God.

Why in the world did Jeremiah buy that field? Now that’s a good question! The answer, according to Jeremiah 32, is this. *If we really believe the Lord, it shows.* That’s why Jeremiah did what he did, because he possessed real faith, living faith, and when that’s the case, *it shows!* How specifically does it show? In our lives, as in Jeremiah’s, it ought to show in at least four ways.

I. We show we believe the Lord through our preaching (1-5).

Preaching is precisely what Jeremiah did. He was a prophet, a preacher. Notice verses 1-2, “The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. ² At that time the army

of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem, and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the guard that was in the palace of the king of Judah.”

Not everyone is called to be a preacher (although in a sense all of us who know Christ are commanded to “preach” and give a verbal witness for Him; Acts 1:8). But what if the Lord has called you to preach? Then if you truly believe Him, you’ll show it by preaching. God called Jeremiah to preach (we’ll look at his calling next week) and it wasn’t an easy assignment.

A. Jeremiah paid a price for the message he preached (1-2). In fact, he ended up incarcerated for it. Chronologically, chapter 32 seems to follow chapters 37-38 which explain how Jeremiah ended up incarcerated. We’re told in chapter 37 that the Babylonians surrounded Jerusalem for about a year. A reprieve came when the Babylonians heard of an Egyptian threat and temporarily lifted the siege and left town. Jeremiah also tried to leave Jerusalem to go to his home town in Benjamin and set things in order. But Jewish soldiers accused him of defecting to the Babylonians, arrested him, and threw him in a dungeon where he almost died. Later he was moved by King Zedekiah to confinement in the courtyard of the guard in the royal palace, where we find him as chapter 32 begins.

Yes, Jeremiah paid a great price for preaching his message. But that shouldn’t surprise us. That’s what we do if we really believe the Lord. If we believe the Lord has called to preach, then we show our belief by preaching, no matter what happens.

B. Jeremiah said exactly what the Lord told him to say, even though it sounded unpatriotic (3-5). And *unpatriotic* is exactly how Jeremiah’s message sounded to his fellow Jews, as verses 3-5 indicate (NIV).

“Now Zedekiah king of Judah had imprisoned him there, saying, ‘Why do you prophesy as you do? You say, ‘This is what the LORD says: I am about to hand this city over to the king of Babylon, and he will capture it. Zedekiah king of Judah will not escape out of the hands of the Babylonians but will certainly be handed over to the king of Babylon, and will speak with him face to face and see him with his own eyes. He will take Zedekiah to Babylon, where he will remain until I deal with him, declares the LORD. If you fight against the Babylonians, you will not succeed.’”

Can you imagine preaching that message? In our context it would be like a pastor in Washington DC announcing, “The Russian subs are off the Atlantic coast and while our president says we’re safe, it’s not true. The Lord is incensed by our nation’s sin, and He says we’re going into captivity. All of us. Including our president. And He says there’s no use trying to fight. It’s a done deal. He says we should lay down our weapons and surrender.”

That kind of preaching will get you thrown into prison in any country. Why then preach that message? Jeremiah said it because *the Lord told him to say it*. No matter how it sounded and no matter what it cost him.

Friends, anybody can say they believe in the Lord, but actions reveal the truth about our faith. As Jeremiah demonstrated, if we really believe, it shows. And it shows, first of all, through our preaching.

It’s true. We are called to proclaim an unpopular message, are we not? We are called to announce to the world that the Creator God is offended by our sin and that His judgment is coming. That’s not a popular message. Tell them they are good, that God loves them, no problem. But good people do not want to be told that they are “sinners” heading for judgment. Nor do they like hearing that they need a Savior and that there is

only one Savior whose name is Jesus Christ. Yet this is the truth, the *gospel* truth, and if we really believe it, we'll show it by our preaching.

II. We show we believe the Lord through our spending (6-15).

As the saying goes, "You put your money where your mouth is." When we really believe the Lord, it shows up in our bank statement. It did for Jeremiah as follows.

A. The Lord told Jeremiah to buy a field (6-7). Notice verses 6-7, "Jeremiah said, 'The word of the LORD came to me: Behold, Hanamel the son of Shallum your uncle will come to you and say, 'Buy my field that is at Anathoth, for the right of redemption by purchase is yours.'"

That's interesting. *Your cousin is coming*, says the Lord. *He is going to try to sell you his field*. Why would he do that? In light of the circumstances, it's not hard to guess why. Apparently, he needs the cash.

When someone says to us, "I've got some prime waterfront property in the everglades I'll sell you for a good price," we know the fitting response is, "What kind of fool do you think I am?"

In a very real sense, that was Jeremiah's situation. It's possible that the field he was asked to buy had already been captured by the invading Babylonians. And if not yet, it certainly would be captured and occupied very soon and for the next seven decades.

Does that sound like a good business venture to you? If you're in the business of doing God's will, it should, for reasons we'll discuss in a moment.

Notice what happened next in verses 8-12. "Then Hanamel my cousin came to me in the court of the guard, in accordance with the word of the LORD, and said to me, 'Buy my field that is at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, for the right of possession and redemption is yours; buy it for yourself.' Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD.⁹ "And I bought the field at Anathoth from Hanamel my cousin, and weighed out the money to him, seventeen shekels of silver.¹⁰ I signed the deed, sealed it, got witnesses, and weighed the money on scales.¹¹ Then I took the sealed deed of purchase, containing the terms and conditions and the open copy.¹² And I gave the deed of purchase to Baruch² the son of Neriah son of Mahseiah, in the presence of Hanamel my cousin, in the presence of the witnesses who signed the deed of purchase, and in the presence of all the Judeans who were sitting in the court of the guard."

Did you catch that? The Lord told Jeremiah to buy a field. And so, he did.

B. Jeremiah bought the field even though he would never enjoy it (8-15). Never enjoy it? Hold on! What's going on here? What's going on is that Jeremiah's faith is showing up in his life again, this time in his spending.

We don't know how big the property was, where Jeremiah got his money, how he secured it while in prison, and why he had money while his cousin didn't. But these details aren't important, as far as the point of the text goes. What's important is what Jeremiah did with his money, and why. I want us to consider three insights into Jeremiah's spending from this passage.

First, he spent his money in submission to the Word of God. Apparently, due to the invasion, Jeremiah's cousin was having financial problems, as was the case with nearly every Jewish citizen. It seems that Hanamel was childless, so he took advantage of a legal provision the Lord Himself established (see Leviticus 25:25; Ruth 4:1-6). In the Mosaic law the Lord gave instructions about what should happen if a Hebrew couldn't

² In verse 12 we find the first mention of Baruch in the book.

afford to keep a piece of property. He authorized a near kinsman to buy the land in order to keep it in the family, and thus secure the future of God's chosen nation and purposes for that nation.

Here's the question. Does God's Word apply to us only when it's convenient for us to obey it? For instance, His Word says that we are to give Him the first-fruits of our income (Prov. 3:9; Malachi 3:10; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:7). We're to do this as an act of worship which shows that He means more to us than the material blessings He gives us. So, do these verses apply when we're not sure how we're going to pay our bills this month, when we find ourselves thinking, "I can't afford to obey God's Word right now"? This was precisely Jeremiah's situation. It made no sense to spend his money this way, except for the fact that God's Word said to do so. And so Jeremiah chose to spend his money in submission to the Word of God.

It boils down to who we're going to believe. Are we going to believe the Lord or the circumstances we're in? The issue isn't the amount, either. The issue is whether we are going to believe God's Word enough to give Him the first portion of every paycheck and then trust Him to meet our needs with what remains.

Second, he spent his money with the future in mind. Put yourself in Jeremiah's shoes. Talk about a no-brainer economically speaking! *You're asking me to do what, cousin? Buy your field? Now? Haven't you been listening to my preaching? I've been saying for years now that we're going to lose this land to foreigners. All of it. And in case you haven't noticed, the enemy troops are here! Nevertheless, cousin Hanamel, I'll buy it.*

What? Why do that? Why did Jeremiah buy that property if he knew he was going to lose it? And the simple answer is this. He spent his money with the future in mind. You see, destruction wasn't the only prophecy that Jeremiah had been preaching. So was *restoration*. When we look back at chapters 30 and 31, we hear Jeremiah proclaiming that after the Babylonian exile ended, the Lord was going to restore His people Israel to their land. He says Jeremiah 30:3, "For behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will restore the fortunes of my people, Israel and Judah, says the LORD, and I will bring them back to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall take possession of it."

That was a bold prediction. Do you really believe those words, Jeremiah? It's so easy to say we believe things, but in chapter 32 Jeremiah put his faith on display. He reached for his money bag and started counting. In the Hebrew it reads literally "seven shekels and ten" rather than "seventeen shekels." Keil and Delitzsch speculate that perhaps this was a law form, or possibly saying that the price was "seven shekels *of gold* and ten shekels *of silver*."³

I read one commentator who pointed out that the price was quite small for land, but that's relative, isn't it? Who throws away money of *any* amount (whether it's seventeen shekels or seventy shekels) on a business venture like this?⁴ Only a man who sees what others fail to see. Jeremiah knows his people are coming back home, and whether he's going to enjoy the fruit of this land or not isn't the issue. This purchase is about *God* and *God's purposes for His people*. And Jeremiah wants to show the people around him that he believes God.

³ Keil and Delitzsch, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, pp. 50-51.

⁴ As Keil and Delitzsch observe, the buyer wasn't really buying the land but only the harvests that land would produce between the present date and the year of Jubilee, for in that year the land would return to the former owner. Keil and Delitzsch, p. 51.

So he signed the deed, sealed it, and gave it to his friend, Baruch, with these public instructions in verses 13-15. “I charged Baruch in their presence, saying,¹⁴ ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Take these deeds, both this sealed deed of purchase and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware vessel, that they may last for a long time.’¹⁵ For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land.’”

Archaeologists have found storage jars like this at Elephantine in Egypt and at Qumran. The Dead Sea scrolls which were written on leather and preserved in earthenware jars lasted for over two thousand years.⁵

Friends, this is a man who spent his money with the future in mind. Again, not just his own future, but the future of his nation, and more specifically, the future of God’s plan for his nation.

Back in 2010 I received a newsletter from Social Security. It told me how much I could expect to receive when I retire. But what caught my eye was this statement, “The Social Security system is facing serious financial problems... In 2016 we will begin paying more in benefits than we collect in taxes. Without changes, by 2037 the Social Security Trust Fund will be exhausted...”⁶

Let that sink in. In 2010 a Social Security document told me that in just six years there would be more money going out than coming in. How did that happen? I’m not an economist, but it’s not hard to figure it out. As a nation we have not been spending our money with the future in mind. My grandmother who lived through the depression wouldn’t talk on the telephone more than five minutes in order to save money. Something’s happened to us, friends, and we would do well to pay attention to Jeremiah. The future is coming and we ought to live like it.

This brings us to the third insight that we glean from Jeremiah. *Third, he spent his money to bring honor to the One who gave it to him.* Quite frankly, sometimes the Lord asks us to do things that don’t make sense to the secular mind.

“Abraham, offer your son Isaac on the altar.”

“Moses, go to Pharaoh and tell him to let my people go.”

“Jeremiah, buy the field.”

And these men obeyed. Why? They did what they did because they had one consuming passion, and that was to bring honor to the One who gave them their lives and everything else they possessed. Is that true of us? Is it true of our spending?

Think of what would happen if all of us made a conscious decision to spend every dollar we possess in the way that would maximize the glory of the One who entrusted it to us. If we did that, we’d be able to send more missionaries to the nations this year, and increase our support of TSBC and CRADLE and Scioto Hills expanding our impact initiative, and do many other things in house to help us fulfill our mission.

And this principle applies at home, too. Before pulling out the credit card this week, let’s ask ourselves, “Is this the best way I can use the money God has entrusted to me for His honor?” It’s all from Him, through Him, and to Him (Romans 11:36), and if we really believe that, if we really believe Him, *it shows*. It shows in our preaching. It shows in our spending.

⁵ See Charles Feinberg, *Jeremiah*, p. 583.

⁶ *Your Social Security Statement*, February 2, 2010

III. We show we believe the Lord through our praying (16-25).

Watch what Jeremiah does next in verse 16. “After I had given the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed to the LORD.” Let’s not glamorize Jeremiah. He was a man just like us. He had fears and doubts and questions. Apparently, based on what he prayed in the following verses, he began to have second thoughts. That’s not unusual, for even people of great faith have doubts from time to time. But they do something with their doubts, as Jeremiah did. They *pray*. Jeremiah brought two elements to the Lord in this prayer, and the order is significant. He brought his *praise* to the Lord and then his *predicament*.

A. Jeremiah brought his praise to the Lord (16-23). In his praise he called attention to four features pertaining to the Lord.

1. *He called attention to His power (17).* Jeremiah prays in verse 17 (NIV), “Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.” Perhaps it goes without saying, but Jeremiah said it. If you can make the heavens and the earth, then nothing is too hard for you. Such is the power of God!

2. *He called attention to His loving involvement in people’s lives (18-19).* In verses 18-19 (NIV), “You show love to thousands but bring the punishment for the fathers’ sins into the laps of their children after them. O great and powerful God, whose name is the LORD Almighty, great are your purposes and mighty are your deeds. Your eyes are open to all the ways of men; you reward everyone according to his conduct and as his deeds deserve.” During the tough times, it’s easy to lose sight of the obvious, but Jeremiah verbalized it. Lord, You are involved in our lives. *Your eyes are open to all the ways of men.*

3. *He called attention to His past work in redemption (20-22).* Jeremiah continues in verses 20-22 (NIV), “You performed miraculous signs and wonders in Egypt and have continued them to this day, both in Israel and among all mankind, and have gained the renown that is still yours. You brought your people Israel out of Egypt with signs and wonders, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with great terror. You gave them this land you had sworn to give their forefathers, a land flowing with milk and honey.”

Rehearsing what God did in the past is a vital part of prayer. We must never take for granted where we used to be and what God did about it. We used to be slaves in Egypt, says Jeremiah. But then You brought us out of bondage and gave us a new life in the promised land.

That’s my testimony as well. How about you? I used to be a slave to sin, but the Lord God brought me out of bondage and gave me new life. That’s what redemption is all about. God takes action to set slaves free. It’s why He sent His Son into the world, who died on a cross to pay the ransom payment for sin. Three days later Jesus Christ left His tomb alive, and today He sets free the slave who calls on Him. If that has happened in our lives, then let’s praise Him for it!

4. *He called attention to His present work in bringing destruction (23).* Notice verse 23 (ESV), “And they entered and took possession of it. But they did not obey your voice or walk in your law. They did nothing of all you commanded them to do. Therefore you have made all this disaster come upon them.”

Did you catch that? The God who redeemed our people is the same God who brought this disaster on our people, says Jeremiah. That’s because He is sovereign and therefore deserves our praise.

Do you begin your prayers with praise? It's one of the ways that real faith shows, so let's learn from Jeremiah. Even in the tough times we can still (and indeed it's vital that we do) bring to the Lord our praise.

Now watch what Jeremiah say next to the Lord in verses 24-25. "Behold, the siege mounds have come up to the city to take it, and because of sword and famine and pestilence the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans who are fighting against it. What you spoke has come to pass, and behold, you see it.²⁵ Yet you, O Lord GOD, have said to me, 'Buy the field for money and get witnesses'—though the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans."

I love what Jeremiah just did. He's no super-saint, just a sinner saved by grace like us. So after bringing his praise to the Lord, he opens up about the predicament that's on his heart.

B. Jeremiah brought his predicament to the Lord (24-25). Here's my loose paraphrase. "Okay, Lord," says Jeremiah. "I did what You told me to do, but I must confess I'm a bit confused. *We're about to lose our country.* I get that. And yet just now *You told me to buy a field.* I'm not sure I understand the purpose of that. Am I hearing You correctly?"

This is the way prayer sounds when we're walking by faith, beloved. Sometimes we feel like William Cowper who penned these classic words, *God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform. He plants His footsteps on the sea, and rides upon the storm.* And when His ways seem mysterious, we run *to* Him, not *from* Him, as did Jeremiah. This is what living faith looks like. If we believe the Lord, we show it by our preaching, by our spending, and by our heartfelt God-centered praying.

IV. We show we believe the Lord through our listening (26-44).

Notice what happened next. We're told in verse 26, "The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah." The NIV says, "Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah." *Then.* Right after Jeremiah went to the Lord with his struggle, *then* the Lord sent His word to Jeremiah. For the sake of time, allow me to summarize His message. It has two parts. Part one, judgment is coming. Part two, restoration is coming.

A. The Lord announced that He was going to judge His people (26-35).

1. *He clarified how it would happen (27-29).* Notice verses 27-29, "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me?"²⁸ Therefore, thus says the LORD: Behold, I am giving this city into the hands of the Chaldeans and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall capture it.²⁹ The Chaldeans who are fighting against this city shall come and set this city on fire and burn it, with the houses on whose roofs offerings have been made to Baal and drink offerings have been poured out to other gods, to provoke me to anger."

Notice that the Lord is the Actor in this unfolding drama. The Babylonians are the sword, but the LORD says He Himself is swinging the sword. *I am giving this city into the hands of the Babylonians.* Then, after He clarifies *how*, the LORD clarifies *why*.

2. *He clarified why it would happen (30-35).* In verses 30-35 Yahweh says, "For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have done nothing but evil in my sight from their youth. The children of Israel have done nothing but provoke me to anger by the work of their hands, declares the LORD."³¹ This city has aroused my anger and wrath, from the day it was built to this day, so that I will remove it from my sight³² because of all the evil of the children of Israel and the children of Judah that they did to provoke me to anger—their kings and their officials, their priests and their prophets, the men of Judah

and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.³³ They have turned to me their back and not their face. And though I have taught them persistently, they have not listened to receive instruction.³⁴ They set up their abominations in the house that is called by my name, to defile it.³⁵ They built the high places of Baal in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to offer up their sons and daughters to Molech, though I did not command them, nor did it enter into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.”

This is why the disaster is coming. My people keep turning from Me. They keep turning their backs to Me and refuse to listen to Me. I have no alternative. There’s only one way to stop this non-sense. Judgment is coming. That’s part one. Here’s part two.

B. The Lord announced that He was going to restore His people (36-44).

Amazing. The Lord is not like us. People hurt us. We get frustrated. We give up on them. Not the Lord. He judges, yes, but He doesn’t give up. He says He is going to restore Israel in four ways. He says, “I’m going to restore them *to this land, to Me, to My ways, and to prosperity.*”

1. *I’m going to restore them to this land (37).* Notice verses 36-37 (NIV), “You are saying about this city, ‘By the sword, famine and plague it will be handed over to the king of Babylon’; but this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I will surely gather them from all the lands where I banish them in my furious anger and great wrath; I will bring them back to this place and let them live in safety.”

The Babylonians are going to take My people to many lands, but I will bring them back to *this land*. And I will give them *safety* in this land.

2. *I’m going to restore them to Me (38).* Verse 38 says, “They will be my people, and I will be their God.” The prophets used this phrase over and over again.⁷ This is the promise of God. This is where His plan is heading. They will be My people, He says. I will be their God. God is intent on restoring a people and bringing them to Himself.

Friends, a word of application. The Lord doesn’t want mere religious activity. He wants a people who will enjoy Him forever. This is the purpose of His redemption, whether He is redeeming Israel or new covenant believers. He restores sinners so that they will enjoy a relationship with Him.

“But how that happen?” you ask. “As sinners, we’re prone to wander from Him.” Through Jeremiah, He says He will take care of that problem as well.

3. *I’m going to restore them to My ways (39-41).* In verses 39-41 (ESV) the Lord says, “I will give them one heart and one way [NIV ‘singleness of heart and action’], that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them.⁴⁰ I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them [NIV ‘I will never stop doing good to them’]. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.⁴¹ I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.”

There’s far too much here to unpack in this message. But note the highlights. The Lord says He’s going to restore a people to this land, to Himself, and to His ways. He’s going to accomplish all this by changing this people *inside out*. He will give this people a *heart change* that will result in *life change*, and not just for a few centuries either. He says He will make *an everlasting covenant* with this people.

Wow. This is the Lord’s promise. I’m going to restore them *to this land, to Me, to My ways, and fourthly to prosperity.*

⁷ Ezekiel 11:20; 14:11; 36:28; Zechariah 8:8; Jeremiah 7:23; 11:4; 31:1,33

4. *I'm going to restore them to prosperity (42-44).* We see this in verses 42-44, "For thus says the LORD: Just as I have brought all this great disaster upon this people, so I will bring upon them all the good that I promise them.⁴³ Fields shall be bought in this land of which you are saying, 'It is a desolation, without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.'⁴⁴ Fields shall be bought for money, and deeds shall be signed and sealed and witnessed, in the land of Benjamin, in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, in the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the Shephelah, and in the cities of the Negeb; for *I will restore their fortunes*, declares the LORD."

So there's the Lord's message to Jeremiah. He knows His servant is confused. Why buy a piece of property he will never enjoy? And the Lord answers that question by telling Jeremiah He's going to judge His people and then restore His people.

Now answer this question. Did the Lord tell Jeremiah anything new here? He didn't, did he? There's no new revelation here. This is the message the Lord has been giving to Jeremiah all his prophetic life. So what then is the Lord's intent in repeating it?

It's called the ministry of reminding, and people struggling with doubts need it continually. Including prophets. Yes, Jeremiah, you heard me correctly. The judgment is coming, but so is the restoration. That's why I wanted you to buy the field. And you did well. For the past three decades you've done what I asked you to do through your preaching. Now you've done it through your spending. Well done, my faithful servant. Your message is going forth loud and clear, and I'm pleased with you!

Friends, if we truly believe the Lord, it will show up not just in our preaching and spending and praying, but also in our listening. Like Jeremiah, our ears will be tuned in to one voice. What He says, we will do, no matter what. As Jesus later put it, "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4)." That being the case, let's make it personal.

Make It Personal: Two questions in light of Jeremiah's example...

1. *How am I treating the word of the Lord?* The Lord told Jeremiah to buy a field. Jeremiah heard and obeyed. What is the Lord been telling you to do? Maybe He's been telling you that you need to call on His Son for salvation. Maybe it's to make your faith public through baptism. Maybe it's to join a local church. Perhaps it's to start tithing, or to forgive someone, or to get involved in a new ministry. Maybe it's to practice radical amputation and get rid of that sinful habit. Maybe you've tried to get rid of it and keep failing, and now He says it's time to humble yourself and seek help from a brother or sister who's skilled in providing biblical counseling.

The question again is this. How am I treating His Word? Which leads to an even more specific question.

2. *What is the Lord asking me to do today to show that I really believe Him?* That's what it's all about. If we really believe Him, *it shows*. Living faith involves action. Like buying a piece of property. What action is He calling us to take today?

Song of Response: #279 "*Faith of Our Fathers*" (all four verses)

This evening: Scioto County OARBC at Grace BC Minford, Bill Kopas preaching