

### The Descriptions of God's Discipline

#### Jeremiah 9

**Jeremiah 9:1-2** – *“Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! <sup>2</sup> Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging place for travelers, that I might leave my people and go from them! For they are all adulterers; an assembly of treacherous men.”*

#### Background Notes

In Jeremiah 7 & 8:1-3, we studied Jeremiah's "Temple Sermon." Jeremiah declared that the people of Judah knew that they were sinners, and they knew that they had departed from the Lord - but they refused to heed the word of the true prophets and return to the Lord. They preferred to enjoy their sin, and they chose to believe the false prophets' message of "Peace, peace!" But there would be no peace for Judah.

The people thought that somehow God would never allow them to be conquered because the beautiful Temple of the Lord was in Jerusalem. The people were repeating "The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord" as a religious mantra or good luck charm. They thought God would continue to protect His House, just as He did 100 years earlier when Sennacherib of Assyria attacked Jerusalem.

But in his "Temple Sermon" (and the prophecies that follow) Jeremiah said, "I'm so sorry, folks. Don't delude yourselves. The Temple won't protect you from God's judgment. You have reached the point of no return. Jerusalem will be conquered and destroyed, and you will be removed from the Land that God gave to His people."

In chapter 8 and the beginning of chapter 9, notice that Jeremiah was not emotionally detached from his message of judgment, as some preachers are today. No, Jeremiah was greatly concerned. His emotions were involved. In Jeremiah 8:18 he said, *"I would comfort myself in sorrow; my heart is faint in me.* And in chapter 9:1 he said, *"Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"*

Because of this verse and his emotional concern for Judah, Jeremiah is known as the "Weeping Prophet."

Jeremiah was so distraught over the sinful condition of the people around him that he longed to get away to a lonely place in the wilderness where he could escape from the sin and be alone with God: *"Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging place for travelers, that I might leave my people, and go from them! For they are all adulterers; an assembly of treacherous men."* Have you ever felt that way? Every believer who is sick at heart because of the surrounding sin can identify with Jeremiah here.

#### Doctrinal Points

## 1. The discipline of God may involve removal from position.

**Jeremiah 9:3-11** - *“And like their bow they have bent their tongues for lies. They are not valiant for the truth on the earth. For they proceed from evil to evil, and they do not know Me,” says the Lord. <sup>4</sup>“Everyone take heed to his neighbor and do not trust any brother, for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbor will walk with slanderers. <sup>5</sup> Everyone will deceive his neighbor and will not speak the truth; they have taught their tongue to speak lies; they weary themselves to commit iniquity. <sup>6</sup> Your dwelling place is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know Me,” says the Lord.*

*<sup>7</sup> Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: “Behold, I will refine them and try them; for how shall I deal with the daughter of My people? <sup>8</sup> Their tongue is an arrow shot out. It speaks deceit. One speaks peaceably to his neighbor with his mouth, but in his heart he lies in wait. <sup>9</sup> Shall I not punish them for these things?” says the Lord. “Shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?”*

*<sup>10</sup> I will take up a weeping and wailing for the mountains, and for the dwelling places of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up, so that no one can pass through; nor can men hear the voice of the cattle. Both the birds of the heavens and the beasts have fled; they are gone. <sup>11</sup> “I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a den of jackals. I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant.”*

Verses 3-9 contain a catalog of Judah's sins. Spiritual adultery and physical adultery (v2), treachery and falsehood (v2-3), deceit and slander - even against their neighbors (v4-5), refusal to know God (v6), and planning evil against people and hiding it behind friendly masks (v8). For these sins, God would test and try them in His crucible (v7). They would be punished (v9).

God's punishment of Judah would involve removing the people from the Land that God had given them - the Land of promise and blessing. The cultivated fields and pastures would be laid waste, the cattle would be stolen, and even the birds and beasts would flee the land (v10). Jerusalem, the once-bustling capital of the nation, would become a heap of ruins, and the cities of Judah would become ghost towns (v11).

The question “why” was asked in verse 12: *“Why does the land perish and burn up like a wilderness, so that no one can pass through? The answer was given in verses 13-14: “And the Lord said, “Because they have forsaken My law which I set before them, and have not obeyed My voice, nor walked according to it, <sup>14</sup> but they have walked according to the dictates of their own hearts and after the Baals, which their fathers taught them.”*

Therefore, they would be removed from the land: *“I will scatter them also among the Gentiles... and I will send a sword after them until I have consumed them” (v16).*

Instead of milk and honey, the people of Judah would drink the polluted waters and eat the bitter food of captivity in a foreign land: *“Look! I will feed them with bitterness and give them poison to drink. I will scatter them around the world, to be strangers in distant lands...” (v15-16).* And they would be scattered among the nations (v16), a prophecy that has literally come true.

As God had to remove His people Israel from their position in the Land of blessing because of their sin, so today God may have to remove unfaithful Christians from positions of leadership because of their sin. This is not loss of salvation. No. It

is loss of responsible position, of privilege, of leadership, and of service for the Lord. God is looking for faithful and committed Christians, so He must discipline His unfaithful people today, just as He disciplined His people Israel in the Old Testament. The discipline of God may involve removal from position.

## 2. The discipline of God may involve removal of life.

**Jeremiah 9:17-22** – *“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Consider and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for skillful wailing women, that they may come. <sup>18</sup> Let them make haste and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run with tears and our eyelids gush with water. <sup>19</sup> For a voice of wailing is heard from Zion: ‘How we are plundered! We are greatly ashamed, because we have forsaken the land, because we have been cast out of our dwellings.’” <sup>20</sup> Yet hear the word of the Lord, O women, and let your ear receive the word of His mouth. Teach your daughters wailing, and everyone her neighbor a lamentation. <sup>21</sup> For death has come through our windows, has entered our palaces, to kill off the children— no longer to be outside! And the young men— no longer on the streets!*

<sup>22</sup> *Speak, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Even the carcasses of men shall fall as refuse on the open field, like cuttings after the harvester, and no one shall gather them.’”*

These verses are like a funeral dirge over the coming death of the city at the hands of the Babylonian army. Many thousands of people would be killed - removed by death, and many of the remaining people of those who were not killed would be taken away - removed as captives.

In verses 17-20, the professional mourning women were called to wail for Zion, and to teach their daughters a wailing dirge. Death would come to the city like a plague and cut down young men and children in death (v21). Conditions would be so bad that bodies would lie on the open field like unattended sheaths of grain (v22).

As God removed many of His rebellions and sinful people from ancient Israel through death, so God may remove rebellious and sinful Christians through death today. This happened to some of the Christians in Corinth: *“For this reason, many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep”* (1 Corinthians 11:30). 1 John 5:16 says that, for believers, there is “a sin leading to death.” Isn’t it better for sinful believers to be removed from this earth and taken away to Heaven before they sin even more - and perhaps cause others to sin? God’s discipline may involve removal of life.

## Practical Applications

### 1. Don’t boast in human wisdom and achievement!

**Jeremiah 9:23-24** - *“Thus says the Lord: ‘Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom. Let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches. <sup>24</sup> But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,” says the Lord.*”

Verse 23 is a description of the typical unbeliever - and unfortunately it describes many Christians as well. They're proud of their own wisdom, or their own power, or their own wealth and possessions. Do you know anyone like that? But there's only one biblical form of "boasting," and that is to boast about the Lord! *"Let them boast in this alone: That they truly know me, and understand that I am the Lord of justice and of righteousness whose love is steadfast; and that I love to be this way."*

Biblical "boasting" is talking about knowing the Lord – about His loyal love, His holiness, and His justice and righteousness, all of which we've come to experience because we know Him! So don't boast in human wisdom and achievement - boast in the Lord!

## **2. Don't trust in religious rites and rituals.**

**Jeremiah 9:25-26** - *"Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "that I will punish all who are circumcised with the uncircumcised - <sup>26</sup> Egypt, Judah, Edom, the people of Ammon, Moab, and all who are in the farthest corners, who dwell in the wilderness. For all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart."*

Circumcision was a sign of the covenant that God made with Abraham and the Jewish people. It was to be an outward sign of an inward commitment to the Lord. But even though the Jewish men had undergone the ritual of circumcision, most of the Jewish people had no inward commitment to the Lord. God said that they were uncircumcised spiritually, even though they were circumcised physically. For them, circumcision was just a religious ritual - a religious rite that meant nothing. They were no better off than the surrounding pagan nations that were involved in their own false religious rituals.

Here's the lesson the Lord is teaching to us in these verses: If you just go through the motions of religious traditions and rituals (like baptism, communion, confirmation, or attending church), but you don't know the Lord, and you're unwilling to walk with the Lord - then these ceremonies and rituals mean nothing. You're no better off than pagans who also practice "religious" rites and rituals.

So don't put your trust in religious rites and rituals!