

# Standing Strong in the Midst of the Fire (Part 1)

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 28 April 2021

Preacher: Willard Lyons

[ 0 : 00 ] We are going from chapter 1 now to chapter 26.

! It's a long, long jump. But remember, the second session passed out the papers on the synopsis of each chapter.

! And you can glimpse through that. I thought I'd just look at some of that tonight quickly before we actually get into chapter 26. In chapter 2, Jeremiah really begins his ministry.

And God sets forth his case against Judah. And rehearses the fact of their covenant relationship with him. And also then he contends with the house of Israel.

In that they have abandoned him in actuality. Two evils that Judah committed. First of all, they've forsaken the fountains of living waters, the scripture says.

[ 1 : 08 ] They've hewn for themselves broken cisterns that cannot hold water. And then secondly, they have forsaken the Lord. They're totally indifferent to the Lord. And the fear of God is not in them.

So you can begin to see a progression here of what's happening in the kingdom of Judah. And so for that reason, God gives them their deliverance.

The reason for their deliverance from Egypt and their past history was not for their freedom, but so that they may serve God and see him and be drawn in their heart to him.

They're planted as God's choice vine of pure seed. And they turned that into a degenerate shoot of a wild vine.

But God is gracious. He's merciful. And in the midst, early on, he begins to give them an invitation to return to him and be restored.

[ 2 : 07 ] So God's mercy is shown early on that in chapter two. But their response to that is that they keep on saying, I'm innocent. I have not sinned.

So God then pronounces his judgment upon them. Then in chapter three, God withholds rain because of their sin.

And Jeremiah is instructed to proclaim God's message to Israel. And that is one of repentance and restoration where God extends his mercy and his grace to them.

Then jumping to chapter seven, God gives to the nation, to the kingdom of Judah, the ingredients or conditions for restoration.

The case against them was that God's house has become a den of robbers and the consequence of failure to repent is given in verses 12 and 15.

[ 3 : 08 ] Then here's the drastic thing. This, you know, the major thing is, no matter what the generation is, God allows sin to go to a certain extent.

And then the scripture shows us that sin comes to its full. In other words, it comes to the point where God says, that's it. I'm not going to deal with this any longer without pouring out my judgment and my wrath upon you.

In chapter seven, not only does he give conditions for restoration, but because of their rejection of that, Jeremiah is instructed not to pray for Judah.

Do not pray for them. I will not hear your prayer. I will not honor that. Do not pray for them. Well, let's look at that. That's in verses 16 through 19 of chapter seven, because I think it'd be, it'd do us well to see that, to give us an indication here of where they're at in this.

In chapter seven of Jeremiah, Let's go ahead and start in verse 13. Jeremiah 7, verse 13, the scripture says, and this is what God is saying to the kingdom of Judah.

[ 4 : 32 ] And now, because you have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you rising up early and speaking, but you heard not. And I called you, but you answered not.

Therefore, while I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein you trust and unto the place, which I gave you, I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim. Therefore, pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry, nor pray for them, or prayer for them, neither make intercession to me, for I will not hear thee.

Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger.

Do they provoke me to anger, saith the Lord? Do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces? Thus saith the Lord. Therefore, thus saith the Lord, God, behold, my anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, upon the fruit of the ground, and it shall burn, and it shall not be quenched.

[ 6 : 03 ] What a message to have to deliver to a people. Amen? But that's what God tells Jeremiah to do. And then, in chapter 11, there's a warning to remember and keep the covenant, which, of course, they do not do.

Again, the consequence of that, Jeremiah once again is told not to pray for them. And so there's a plot then against Jeremiah that's revealed by the Lord to Jeremiah, so he'll know what's going on. And in that, then, God protects and avenges Jeremiah. And then, chapter 14, there's a calamity of drought. Jeremiah, interesting here. You know, what a heart Jeremiah has to have.

Because not only does God, earlier on, give opportunity of restoration and repentance, but here, Jeremiah, in the midst of the stern message that he's been preaching, Jeremiah intercedes for the Lord, before the Lord for the people.

In chapter 14, verses 7 through 9, he intercedes on behalf of Judah, but more so on behalf of God's honor. And there's the key there. It's not just that he's asking God to forgive the people of Judah.

[ 7 : 28 ] It's almost come past that. Almost. But he's doing this because they are God's covenant people. And God's honor stands out here in whatever's going to happen as a result of their sin.

So he prays mostly for that particular reason. So God's response was this. Because they have not restrained from sin, he will not accept them, nor restrain his judgment any longer.

And again, he reminds Jeremiah not to pray for them because God will not hear their cry, nor will he accept their offerings. Chapter 15, we see Jeremiah, God responds to Jeremiah's pleading and talks about the four destroyers that will come, which is the sword that will slay, the dogs that will tear up what is slain, the fowls of the heaven to feed upon the carcasses of those the dogs slew, and the wild beasts then will come, number four, to destroy whatever the carcass is left.

And so God's promise and admonition to Jeremiah in the midst of this was one of faithfulness and trust so he can continue to trust God in the midst of that. And then in chapter 18, which is a popular passage, it's Israel in the hands of the potter.

And you remember what happens there. You see the spinning wheel and the potter forming that clay on that spinning wheel.

[ 9 : 06 ] But then notice the scripture, remember, said the clay is marred, but it's marred in the hand of the potter. All right? Have you ever watched anybody work with clay like that on the spinning wheel?

It's amazing. There's a little flaw. If they've done something wrong, well, they'll punch it out again and just reform it to something else. That's the picture you have here with God and the nation of Israel.

He marred it in the potter's hands, made it over into another vessel as it seemed good to him. Good picture here, really. A good picture prophetically of Israel and the church.

God's dealing with Israel and then God's raising up the church to be called after his own namesake. And so thus reads some of the chapters that are going on in chapter 24.

Two baskets fulls of figs and God will set his eyes on them for good. Again, picture of restoration here.

[ 10 : 13 ] And the reality is, as harshly as he deals with Judah and is forced to do so, God still brings restoration to them because they eventually come back into the land as we realize.

So there's good figs, the captives of Judah sent into captivity, but they're sent there for their own good. And then God will set his eyes on them for good.

We'll bring them back into the land. We'll build them up. You build them up and not pull them back down. We'll plant them and not pluck them up.

And, you know, that's the ministry that God early on, we saw last week or so, that God had given to Jeremiah. All right. But more importantly, or most importantly, God will give them a heart to know him.

All right. Notice a heart to know him, not an intellect to know them, but a heart to know them. They will be his people and he will be their God because they will return to him with their whole heart.

[11:17] Always remember that's the aim of God in anything he does with any peoples. And that is to draw their heart to him. And that will happen with the kingdom of Judah.

And in reality, when he brings both kingdoms together as that one covenant nation. Now, that takes us to chapter 26. And as we begin looking into chapter 26, I'm reminded of God's instructions to Joshua after Moses dies.

And he gives to Joshua that command and that commission to direct the people into the land of their inheritance across Jordan River.

In Joshua chapter 1, verse 7, remember, God says to Joshua, only be thou strong and very courageous that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded thee.

Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

Again, be thou strong and very courageous.

[12:32] Same thing with Jeremiah here. It's not going to be an easy road for Jeremiah. It's going to be tremendously tough. A rough road he's going to follow here. At this point of the book, God has already laid out his case against the people of Judah a number of times now.

So Jeremiah is very familiar with it from the words that God's given him to preach. And so are the people of Judah. They had departed from God and gone after idols.

So Jeremiah faced a very trying, a very difficult circumstance in preaching God's word to that backslidden group of covenant people. Now, realize with me, when the heart is set on sin, doesn't matter what people's it is, when their heart is set on sin, it's a very difficult thing for that heart to be recaptured.

That's what Jeremiah faces here. But recognize something here. Let me ask you the question.

What was Jeremiah's real work?

What was he supposed to do? What was Jeremiah's task? It's just simply to preach God's word.

Right? And what I'm trying to allude to is this.

[13:56] It wasn't Jeremiah's task to bring the people to repentance. That was not his task. His task was to preach what God tells him to preach.

And we see it a little bit later. Specifically, completely, every word that God gives him to say, he was to say that to the people of Judah.

That was his task. And so, he has to keep that in mind that he's not the God that's going to make this happen if anything's going to happen.

It's difficult to capture a heart that's set on sin. And Jeremiah, surely, is not going to be able to capture their heart. God can, yes. He'll have to use drastic measures to do it, but he can do that.

Now, we have to realize the same thing. Amen? Yeah. Whenever we're talking to people about the Lord Jesus, especially if they're unsaved folks, it's not our business to bring them to saving faith.

[14:57] It's our business to simply lay out the gospel of Christ to them and let's speak the words that God gives us to speak to do that and let him do the work through his word that only he can do.

Now, the people of Judah that Jeremiah faced, yeah, they were stubborn people. They were difficult people, but they had a reason to be stubborn as far as rejecting the message that Jeremiah gave.

They felt very, very secure because they're Jews. They are part of the covenant people of God.

God had instituted that covenant with the 12 tribes of Israel when they came out of Egyptian bondage.

They're his covenant people, even though at this point they're divided into two kingdoms. They're still the covenant people of God, but for the kingdom of Judah, one of the outstanding aspects of that is, what is it?

I'm going to pick your brains tonight. What was the outstanding feature for the kingdom of Judah as far as their relationship with God is concerned? The temple.

[16:19] They had the temple there. What's the significance of the temple? Yeah. That's God's dwelling place. Remember back in the day of David even, God had said, this is the place, Jerusalem is the place where I'm going to place my name permanently.

All right. In other words, the place where he will dwell permanently with his people. And so that's the reason why the temple was constructed there.

So they had the temple in their presence. So we're secure because we've got that temple. Thus, we've got the presence of God with us. Now, they had a basis for that.

They had a basis for that thing, that thinking. If we've got the temple with us, and this is in reality the city of God, God would not let that be destroyed.

All right? Now, look what Jeremiah says in Jeremiah chapter 7, verse 4. We've zipped past that.

[17:26] But he tells Judah, Judah, trust not in the lying words of the false prophets who maintain that God will protect Jerusalem because his temple is there, saying, this is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.

In other words, the idea is these, these halls, the whole complex of mass buildings, look at what these are. So, their thinking was because the temple is there, God's presence, the city of Jerusalem cannot ever be destroyed.

All right? That was the place God had consecrated as the abiding place of his name. And it's there in Jerusalem and he will not let that be destroyed.

He will not allow his temple to be conquered by any Gentile nation. All right? Because in reality it was a sin for the Jewish people to be under Gentile rule.

Now, that's what they were thinking. And we'll see in just a minute the reasons why. Now, in verse 2 of chapter 26, well, before we get there, what was, what was, other than the fact that this was the dwelling place of God with his people, there's another significance about the temple.

[18:58] What was the real purpose of the temple being established in, amongst the people of Israel? Remember, back in the day of David, David got to thinking, man, here I am sitting in a palace and God dwells in a tent.

Why are we not building a permanent magnificent structure for God to permanently dwell in among his people? He wanted to do that, remember?

Remember, God says, God says, no, you're not going to do it because you've got bloody hands. You're a man of war. I'm trying to think and that's hard for me sometimes.

Did God not also say something to the effect that why do I need a permanent, why do I need a building to dwell in? Seems like he did. You know, why do I need that?

I'm God. I dwell everywhere. Okay. All right. So, there's got to be another significance for the reality that God let Solomon build that structure.

[20:15] They were the covenant people of God. God had made that covenant with them. They needed some type of visible, physical edifice, if you will, to signify the reality of that covenant.

covenant. Is that the covenant you talked about? No. No. No. No. The covenant relationship he's instituted with the nation. Yeah. Needed a place, needed a place for that to be a reality where his people, his covenant people, could come and fellowship with him in worship with his presence being there.

that was important because of the covenant relationship and the covenant of grace given to them.

That was the significance of the temple here.

All right. And so, they've got that. God let them build that and put it there and he dwelt there upon the mercy seat.

Now, that covenant of grace made with Israel has now that visible pledge where they could fellowship with God and that fellowship could be sustained.

[21:39] Now, in verse 2 of chapter 26, take note, God gives Jeremiah some instruction here. He said, stand in the court of the Lord's house.

that place of supposed safety. All right. And speak his word to the people. This is a word that's going to create a great deal of animosity in the life and the heart of the people of Judah concerning most of all Jeremiah.

So, it's going to take a lot of courage to do so. Verses 1 through 3 of chapter 26, in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah, came this word from the Lord.

Thus says the Lord, stand in the court of the Lord's house, Jeremiah, and speak to all the people of the cities of Judah who come to worship in the Lord's house.

All the words that I command you to speak to them. Subtract not a word. Jeremiah couldn't even ad-lib this thing. Amen? No. Specifically, the words I give you.

[ 22 : 50 ] It may be, listen to this, it may just be that they will listen and turn every man from his evil way that I may relent and reverse my decision concerning the evil which I purpose to do to them because of their evil doings.

Israel. Now, at the present time, Judah had come under the control of the protection of Egypt while Jehoiakim remained its king. Jehoiakim, that is, was well schooled in the things of God, in particular the law of God.

Now, his father was Josiah who was the most godly king of all the kings of Judah. 2 Kings chapter 23 verse 25 says, Like unto him, speaking of Josiah, like unto him was there no king before him that turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might according to all the law of Moses.

Neither after him arose there any like him. So, I think we've mentioned before, a great revival came to Judah under Josiah. He commanded that the temple be cleaned out and restored, if you will, renovated.

While they were doing that, they found the copies of the law. He had them read. All right? And as a result, the people of God returned to the Lord.

[ 24 : 21 ] And that reformation lasted over 10 years until Josiah dies. When Josiah dies, Jehoiakim begins his reign. And it became evident that that reformation that took place under Josiah was not a heartfelt reformation.

It was just superficial. Again, superficial because their commitment to the Lord and his word was very nominal and their faith was simply in the fact of their relationship with God that they again are the covenant people and the presence of the temple was with them.

So, that was their guarantee of security, they thought. Now, how did that thinking come about? In 2nd Kings chapter 18 and 19, in the days of Hezekiah, the king of Assyria had invaded Judah and Hezekiah called for Isaiah to pray.

All right? And when Isaiah prayed, he got a word from God that said, don't be afraid, I will defend the city of Jerusalem. I will defend that.

In verse 34 of 2nd Kings 19, he says, for I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake and for my servant David's sake.

[ 25 : 49 ] Now, at that point, the people of Judah interpreted Isaiah's words as meaning, God will never, never, ever let anything happen to Jerusalem, much less the temple.

They didn't realize, or they failed to realize, that what Isaiah was saying, what God was saying to Isaiah was, on this particular one-time event, where Assyria is wanting to come against you, I will spare the city and the temple.

I will save it. I will protect it. It didn't mean forever here. All right? But they interpreted that to mean forever. So you can see how easily they formulated that idea in their mind that they're safe and secure.

No matter what they're doing, no matter how many pagan deities they're worshiping, they're Jews, they're in Jerusalem, we've got the temple here, we're good, we're safe.

Along comes Jeremiah, as well as many others prior to him, speaking just the opposite.

[ 27 : 11 ] Now, it's in the face of that lack of understanding and that misinterpretation of Isaiah's prophecy, that Jeremiah was instructed to speak to them.

And remember what God said in verse 2, speak to all the people of the cities of Judah who come to worship in the Lord's house, all the words that I command you to speak. Subtract not a word.

Now, what a place to preach this message, amen? Right there where everybody comes to worship, that they feel safe and secure. Realize, it's all based upon a misinterpretation of what God said.

All right? You and I likewise must be careful, amen? We must be careful when we're sharing the word of God that we're doing that correctly.

All right? With the correct interpretation and in the proper context that we speak that word, whatever the format or form may be.

[ 28 : 18 ] in 2nd Timothy chapter 4 verse 2 he tells young Timothy, herald and preach the word. Keep your sense of urgency, that is stand by, be at hand and ready, whether the opportunity seems to be favorable or unfavorable, whether it's convenient or inconvenient, whether it is welcomed or unwelcome, you as a preacher of the word are to show people in what way their lives are wrong

and convince them, rebuking and correcting, warning, and urging and encouraging them, being unflagging and inexhaustible in patience and teaching.

And then in 2nd Timothy 2 verses 15 and 16, be diligent to present yourselves approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

Notice how Jeremiah's messages always starts out, thus saith the Lord. All right? Thus says the Lord. Here's what God says.

And when we're projecting the word of God to anyone, that's what we need to get them to see. This is not what I'm saying, this is not what I think, this is what God is saying.

Now, God's desire for the people was to respond in obedience, obedience to His word. So in order for that to happen, Jeremiah has to speak completely and perfectly and exactly all the words that God gives.

[ 29 : 59 ] And likewise, the people must listen to every word without any preconceived notions at all. And there's a key there. You ever stop to think how many preconceived notions we have about things?

even the scriptures, even the things of God, especially those of us that have been raised in church most of our lives.

You know, preconceived notions have been formulated in our mind that might not necessarily be biblically accurate. All right? That's why we've got to get our nose in the book.

Amen? To know what God says and to know specifically what He's saying so that we don't make the same error that the people of Judah did.

Now, the prophet's message, chapter 26, verses 4 through 6, and you will say to them, this is what he's telling Jeremiah, you will say to them, thus says the Lord, or thus says Jehovah, if you will not listen, if you will not listen to and obey me, to walk in my law, which I have set before you, and to hear and obey the words of my servants, the prophets, whom I have sent to you urgently and persistently, though you have not listened and obeyed, then will I make this house, that's the temple, like Shiloh, the home of the tent of meeting, abandoned and later destroyed after the ark was captured by the Philistines, and I will make this city subject to the curses of all nations of the earth, so vile in their sight will it be.

[ 31 : 44 ] Now, again, the message is the idea of the people's departure from God. That's been repeated and repeated by each of the prophets that God has given. I gave to you one of the charts, remember that I gave to you the first session, has a list of the prophets that came before Jeremiah, even when the nation was still the twelve tribe nation.

There's Joel, Amos, Jonah, Micah, Isaiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, even Daniel and Ezekiel in some part, along with the days of Jeremiah's prophecy.

So that's what? 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 prophets. 10 prophets that he's given them and in essence preach the same message except for the fact Jeremiah's message has an addition to it. All right? But 10 prophets God's given them. He has worked diligently, worked hard to speak to those people in an effort to draw their heart back to him.

But their response to every one of the prophets has been for the most part the same. Now, consequence of their refusal to repent is repeated, but with a different picture.

[ 33 : 21 ] Again, that different picture is stated in the words of God in verses 4 through 6, then will I make this house, that is the temple, like Shiloh, that's the home of the tabernacle, I will make this city subject to the curses of all the nations of the earth, so vile in their sight will it be.

Remember what happened in the tabernacle while they was at Shiloh? Ark of the Covenant was there, alright, what happened to the Ark of the Covenant?

By who? The Philistines, the arch enemies of Israel, stole that edifice that was the dwelling place of God in the midst of His people.

Now, they were sorry that they captured it, because some things happened to them, but still, Israel let it get away.

And Jeremiah is saying, and the tabernacle just destroyed. And that's what Jeremiah's difference is here in his prophecy.

[ 34 : 43 ] That's what's going to happen to this city Jerusalem and the temple. Now, he's standing in the courtyard of the temple.

And all the people come in to worship. That's where Jeremiah is. They don't like him anyway. I could vision them saying, what's he doing here?

What's he doing? Well, they're going to find out. And he preaches that message that this place is coming down if you don't turn your hearts back to the Lord.

All right? Now, consequence of rejecting God's word is so drastic because idolatry here leads to empty dead worship and a total rejection of God.

And that's what happens here. I'm just, every time I go through this, I just stand in awe of Jeremiah and the courage that God gave him.

[ 35 : 58 ] You and I need to be very explicit and present a clear message of God's word when we speak it. 1 Peter 3.15 says, But in your hearts set Christ apart as holy and acknowledge him as Lord.

Always be ready to give a logical defense to anyone who asks you to account for the hope that is in you. But do it courteously and respectfully.

And what that means, what he's saying there, really, in the context of the whole thing, he's saying we need to be ready to defend the word of God. Yeah.

To defend it like an attorney. Defending a client. Yeah. Always be ready and to present a clear message of what God says in that.

Well, that's a good place for us to stop. Because we see the response, it's a severe response, of the leaders of Judah to what Jeremiah had to say.

[ 37 : 13 ] And they're ready to kill him. Yeah. They're saying this man is worthy of death because of what he has just said.

But the amazing thing is, you know, God promised to protect Jeremiah. He did. And God does that in a way that nobody ever thought would ever happen.

Never even thought of it. And that's just like God, isn't it? Amen? How many times has God done things in our lives through sources that we've never even thought of?

But he's done it. Amen? That's just like the Lord, isn't it? Always knows us. Always knows the need. And we see again a little bit later, he is Jehovah of hosts.

He has everything at his disposal that he needs to meet any need in any circumstances. Amen? That's our God. Amen.

[ 38 : 19 ] Alright, let's pray. Father, thank you again for your loving kindness. Thank you, Father, for you. Again, the time you've allowed us to have together and looking into your word, and I do pray now that you'll enable us to catch a sense of what you're saying to us in all of this.

It's a dire thing to sin against you, to abandon you, and to live our own lives the way we want to live them and not consider you.

Lord, keep that before us and may it serve to draw us nearer to you and in sweeter fellowship day by day, that as we grow in that fellowship and that relationship with you, the further away the desire of sin comes from our lives.

And so, use us in that way throughout this week to speak to our hearts and our own. And we'll thank you for it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.