

Message #28

Jeremiah 24:1-10

When it comes to life and when it comes to God, sometimes the people who appear to be losing are actually winning and the people who appear to be winning are actually losing. When it comes to God, what appears to be failure may actually be success and what appears to be success may actually be failure. Here is one of those passages that vividly illustrate that point.

There were three main deportations in which the Babylonians removed the Jews from Jerusalem.

- 1) 605 BC- II Chron. 36:5-8–Daniel and his friends taken.
- 2) 597 BC- II Chron. 36:9-18–Jeconiah and others taken.
- 3) 586 BC- II Chron. 36:19-20–Jews killed and Jerusalem destroyed.

In 597 BC, Jehoiachin (Jeconiah), and others had been taken to Babylon (II Kings 24:15-16). Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin, his mother, his wives, his official and all leading men from Jerusalem to Babylon. This included 7,000 military men and 1,000 craftsmen and blacksmiths. This was the second wave of Babylonian deportations.

Now there was a remnant of Jewish people left in the land. They immediately concluded that the ones that were taken away were being punished for their unfaithfulness and the ones that were left were being rewarded for their faithfulness.

In other words, the ones who were taken to Babylon were the losers and the ones left in Jerusalem were the winners. But nothing could be more absurd or untrue. So what God does is to give Jeremiah a vision to illustrate a very important truth.

So what God does is to show Jeremiah two baskets of figs to illustrate an important point:

GOD SOVEREIGNLY DETERMINES WHO HE WILL BLESS AND WHO HE WON'T BLESS AMONG HIS PEOPLE AND HIS CHOICES HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THE APPEARANCE OF THE PRESENT SEEN CIRCUMSTANCES.

In God's sovereign program those who appear to be the losers may in fact be the big winners and those who appear to be the big winners may in fact be the big losers. Sometimes it is the will of God for His faithful people to go through difficult things and times; but His blessings go with them.

Verse 1 sets the stage for this. Nebuchadnezzar, who was the King of Babylon, had come into Judah and had taken into captivity the King of Judah (Jehoiachin/Jeconiah), his officials, his craftsmen and blacksmiths. He had taken them to Babylon.

When Nebuchadnezzar took Jeconiah captive, he appointed Zedekiah to be the replacement king in Judah (II Kings 25:17-20). Naturally, Zedekiah viewed this appointment as a great blessing. He believed God had put him in power and God was blessing him.

This was not the truth and God was giving Jeremiah a vision to show him that.

It was at this very moment of time when God showed Jeremiah two baskets. Notice the wording of **verse 1**, “the LORD showed me.” God did not show this to the political leaders of Judah or the key officials or religious leaders of Jerusalem; He revealed this to Jeremiah, His faithful servant.

God permits faithful people to see and understand things that others do not see or understand. Most of the people in Jerusalem were caught up on the emotion of what they saw—they were still in Jerusalem and the others were gone. They assumed they were successful and the others weren't. Nothing could be more untrue.

In the vision, two baskets were set before the Temple of the LORD in Jerusalem. So obviously, Jeremiah was still in Jerusalem.

According to **verse 2**, one basket had very good figs in it like when they are first ripe and the other basket had very bad figs in it because they were so rotten. Both baskets were brought to the Temple and presented to the LORD (**v. 1**).

Now what we know at this point is that Jeremiah could not find one person in Jerusalem who was righteous and godly. So if this were an analogy based on what the people actually were, all the figs would be rotten.

OBSERVATION #1 – God asks Jeremiah a question. **24:3a**

The question to Jeremiah is “what do you see?” Notice God is addressing Jeremiah. The question God asks him is critical. This is a key interpretive question to any accurate study of God's word. This is a key question of all hermeneutics, which is Bible interpretation. The first question is what you see here? What does this text actually say? What is actually grammatically here?

Many people look at a verse and the first thing they ask is what does it mean to me? That is wrong. The first question should be what is actually here. What does this verse actually say? Don't add to the word and don't subtract from the word, but see what is actually there.

OBSERVATION #2 – Jeremiah answers God's question. **24:3b**

God wants Jeremiah to report to Him what he sees. God is giving Jeremiah a lesson in how to interpret His word, which Jeremiah is doing before God. Ministers who are sloppy in their preparation of handling God's word are making a huge mistake.

Jeremiah said I see a bunch of “figs” in these baskets. Some of the figs are good and very good and some of the figs are bad and very bad. That is what he saw.

The good figs were so good it was like those just ripened. But the rotten ones were bad. In fact, the rotten figs were so rotten that you could not even eat them.

Now it is interesting that Jeremiah does not mention the baskets nor did he mention they were set before the Temple. **What this tells us is the important thing here was the condition of the figs.**

OBSERVATION #3 – God gives Jeremiah the interpretation of what He sees. **24:4-10**

Notice **verse 4** makes it clear this is the inspired word of God. Jeremiah is not giving his own views and interpretations to this; he is giving the word of God. **Verse 5** says this is the word of God coming from the LORD/God of Israel.

What God is going to reveal is that the good figs are the figs that are in Babylon and the bad figs are the figs in Jerusalem.

There are two inspired interpretations God gives Jeremiah: When God gives a vision or uses some symbolism, very often He will interpret it. Jeremiah would have no way of dreaming up the meaning of this without God giving it.

(Interpretation #1) - God interprets the good figs. **24:5-7**

Now keep in mind that not one good person was found anywhere within the people of God (Jer. 5:1). **So the classification of someone being “good” is a pure grace calculation classification.** As we saw last week, God is our righteousness (**23:6**). The good figs here turn out to be the figs who go into captivity.

Now what we are about to see is that places God sends us when He is blessing us may not initially look positive. We may find ourselves in situations and circumstances where we seem to be the loser, but we may in fact be the winner.

Verse 5 makes it clear that God is going to calculate the captives of Judah who have been taken to Babylon as good figs. Now we learn some things about this interpretation:

Fact #1 - God was the One who sent Judah to Babylon. **24:5**

Do not ever forget God is sovereign over everything in our lives, including those things that appear to be negative and bad. The truth is, they may not be negative and bad at all. What appears that way to us may be completely different to God. God sent the good figs into captivity.

Fact #2 - God is the One who will set His eyes on Judah for good. **24:6a**

God would watch over them and protect them. God says I want you to know that everything that is happening to you, I will use for good. So what God is doing is actually good for His people. The captivity appears to be bad, but it is really good.

Fact #3 - God will bring Judah again from Babylon back to her land. **24:6b**

God says the final script of what I am doing has not been written. I will let you go to Babylon, but I will also watch over you and bring you back.

Fact #4 - God will once again build up Judah. **24:6c**

Now keep in mind that this appears to be impossible. Judah is being taken captive out of her land, but God says you do not know the final script yet. God says I am Personally going to build up Judah again.

Fact #5 - God will not overthrow Judah. **24:6d**

God says I will not allow Judah to be overthrown or toppled. This is a guarantee of security.

Fact #6 - God will plant Judah in the land and not pluck her up. **24:6e**

God says I will bring Judah back to this land and plant her in it and she will not be plucked out of it.

Fact #7 - God will give Judah a heart to know Him. **24:7a**

Notice it is God who must give people a heart that wants to know Him. They will be God's people and He will be their God.

Fact #8 - God will cause them to return to Him with all their heart. **27:7b**

The future for the people who appeared to be losers is bright and successful. They will be brought back into the land and they will be blessed by God.

(Interpretation #2) - God interprets the bad figs. **24:8-10**

Initially the bad figs looked like they were the winners. They were not taken captive and they were still in Jerusalem and they had their religious rituals and Temple and they were living and enjoying life.

The bad figs would not have these blessings of God. Zedekiah and his officials and other survivors thought they were the blessed ones. God says nothing could be further from the truth. You are the rotten ones by my classification:

Fact #1 - God says I will make them a terror for all nations to see. **24:9a**

Fact #2 - God says I will put a curse on them and scatter them. **24:9b**

Fact #3 - God says I will send people to kill them with a sword. **24:10a**

Fact #4 - God says I will send famine to kill them. **24:10b**

Fact #5 - God says I will send pestilence to them. **24:10c**

Fact #6 - God says I will destroy them. **24:10d**

Now since Jeremiah is proclaiming this message in Jerusalem, this must have made them mad.

The beauty of this text is the one who would be blessed by God would be the captives, the exploited and the sinful.

The one who would be cursed by God would be the religious people at the Temple.

Religious people may have a good look to them and be rotten.
Justified people may not have a good look to them and be righteous.

PRACTICAL INSIGHTS:

- 1. Positive or Negative Circumstances do not determine the Favor of God. Faithfulness to His word determines it.**
- 2. One who claims God is blessing him may not be actual reality.**
- 3. One who is experiencing trouble may be on the path of God's blessings in the future.**
- 4. God is able to give a person a heart that wants to know Him. Ask Him to do it in your life.**