

Message #8**Jeremiah 4:1-31**

One of the most amazing grace provisions of God for His people is I John 1:9. God promises His people if they confess their sin, He will be faithful and just to forgive their sin and cleanse them from all unrighteousness. Since I came to faith in 1976, I couldn't even begin to count the times that verse has put me on my knees in confession. What an amazing provision of grace. When we fail as a child of God, we can go to God and get it cleaned up. We can go to God when we are ashamed of our sin and acknowledge it and confess it and walk away clean and forgiven of "all unrighteousness."

But let's suppose that someone is a believer and decides not to apply I John 1:9. Let's suppose one is a believer and he sins and he refuses to confess it and get it resolved with God. What then? Now the relationship with God completely changes. The Holy Spirit is grieved and quenched and fellowship with God is gone.

God is a gracious God who has made a marvelous provision for His people when they sin, but if His people refuse to obey what He wants them to do, there will be consequences. This principal of God's people refusing to respond to God's grace and experiencing negative consequences is clearly seen in **Jeremiah 4**.

What Jeremiah presents in **verse 1** is a couple of "if" clauses. If God's people are willing to return to Him, then God will bless them; but if they don't there will be serious consequences. What is crystal clear from this chapter is that:

GOD INVITES HIS SINFUL PEOPLE TO RETURN TO HIM, BUT HE WARNS THAT THERE WILL BE SERIOUS JUDGMENT CONSEQUENCES IF THEY DO NOT REPENT AND RETURN TO HIM.

Make no mistake about this; God will punish His people who persist in their unfaithfulness. There will be negative consequences and chastisements for those who refuse to respond to God's grace.

PART #1 – God calls His people to repent of their sin and return to Him. **4:1-4**

In these verses we get a glimpse of what it really means to return to the Lord, when, as His people, we have failed the Lord. Returning to the Lord is not simply going through some religious ritual; it is a very real concrete action. This is a complete package of things that God's people must do if they want a relationship with God in which He blesses them and is pleased with them:

Fact #1 - Returning to the Lord means to get rid of detestable things. **4:1a**

God demands that His people get rid of any detestable thing from the presence of the Lord. Some of God's people will not ever have close fellowship with God because they will not get rid of things that are detestable in the sight of God.

Fact #2 - Returning to the Lord means you do not waver from this focus. **4:1b**

There must be a real unwavering focus to turn from the evil and walk close with God.

Fact #3 - Returning to the Lord means you pursue a godly life: **4:2**

- A. A godly life continually acknowledges that the Lord lives.
- B. A godly life pursues truth.
- C. A godly life pursues justice.
- D. A godly life pursues righteousness.

At the end of **verse 2** we learn that if God's people repent and do these things, it will have an evangelistic impact on the world. So our ability to impact others is contingent upon us being in a right relationship with God.

Fact #4 - Returning to the Lord means plowing and sowing in new territory. **4:3**

Their religion was so infested with thorns and evil that the only way to return to the Lord was to plow fresh new ground. There is a critical point to see here. God does not want His people content with their old spirituality. He wants them plowing new ground and expanding to new areas of obedience. You must make sure the weeds and thorns are not hindering growth. People right with God make a break from old habits, friends, sins.

Fact #5 - Returning to the Lord means a new circumcised heart. **4:4a**

The assumption of this is that the people realize they cannot do this themselves. They cannot give themselves a new circumcised heart; only God can do that and the people must turn to the Lord to do that. People right with God have a new heart and new perspective of everything.

In these first two verses, notice the "if" clauses. The potential of having a great relationship with God is contingent upon the "if" clauses. **If God's people of all nations will do this, they will experience the blessings of God and will reflect the glory of God (v. 2).**

The tendency for God's people is to blame the national problems and evils on the sinful ideas of secular people. This passage teaches if God's own people will confess their own sin and draw close to Him, He will bless the nations of the world through them. God's people must make certain all idols and immoralities are out of their lives and then God will use them to affect others.

PART #2 – God warns His people that judgment consequences are on the way if they don't repent and return to Him. **4:4b-31**

These are very sober and solemn verses. From here to the end of chapter 6 God warns of judgments He will send upon His own people. The primary target of these judgments is Judah and Jerusalem. God basically says I am going to send ruthless people to do ruthless things to My own people because they will not repent and return to Me.

In **verse 4**, God calls His people to return to Him “or else.” If God's people do not return to Him, He will kindle His wrath against them and He will burn them because of their evil. This is a very solemn warning to His own people.

In fact, what God says He will do is to declare war on His own people. Their evil and moral corruption and wickedness had reached such a level that He decided you either get right with Me now or face My angry judgment. One commentator said, “...Jeremiah 4 is a living nightmare of divine judgment” (Philip Ryken, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, p. 75).

Judgment Reality #1 - There will be a judgment that will physically come from the north.
4:5-18

God calls Judah and Jerusalem to assemble in their cities and put on sackcloth and lament over the fact that God is sending a ferocious judgment from the north. In **verse 6** God makes it clear I am sending this evil power from the north against My own people. It is coming to the land of Zion.

He begins in **verse 5** by announcing it to fortified cities that think they are so secure. According to **verse 7**, God would bring a lion from the north. In Daniel's vision the Lion was Babylon, the bear was Media-Persia, the Leopard was Greece and the dreadful beast was Rome (Dan. 7:1-8). Although it is possible that Jeremiah views Assyria as the Lion, we think it is Babylon, whom God would use to destroy Jerusalem and Judah.

What God is saying is that there is a devastating judgment that God was going to send against His own people.

According to **verse 9**, the king, princes, priests and prophets will prove to be all wrong. There will be a total and complete collapse of leadership. They will be astonished by what God will do to His own people. They had been sold out to doing evil and telling people they were at peace with God, when, in fact, it was a lie.

Verse 10 is odd because Jeremiah questions why God allowed those leaders to deceive the people, saying they had prosperity and peace when God knew He was bringing a sword of wrath from the north upon His own people.

The truth is, in crisis situations that are coming from the hand of God, most politicians and most religious leaders are useless.

When some God-ordained crisis hits, they don't know what to do or say. They will kneel down to some protest group on national TV, but you will not see them kneel down and cry out to God.

In **verses 11-13**, Jeremiah predicts God will send His judgments upon His people and no one can stand against them and God's people will realize they are ruined. It will come on them like a tornado would hit.

But again in **verse 14**, Jeremiah once again invites God's people to wash themselves and get away from evil so that they may be saved.

Verse 15 says that the northern part of the land Dan will be the first to receive judgment but it will move fast to Mt. Ephraim just 10 miles north of Jerusalem. It will come on them fast and furious. Judgment was on the way and **verse 18** says **God's own people have brought this on themselves**. What we do see here is that God, Himself, carefully calculates the judgment. He sends specific judgments against His own people from a specific direction. He controls who does what to His own people.

Judgment Reality #2 - The judgment will bring anguish to one right with God. **4:19-22**

The judgment disaster that God would bring upon His own people left Jeremiah in emotional anguish. He himself was in Jerusalem. The disaster he actually saw made his heart pound. God's judgment is not a light matter. According to **verse 20**, he expected it to hit his own tent/house.

Jeremiah saw the disaster, the devastation, and he knew the reason for this was that God's own people are foolish and stupid. They have no understanding and they pursue evil. They know what is right but they don't do it. They do evil.

Verse 22 is so sad. God's own people do not know God. They don't know His word and they don't pursue His will. They are stupid. They love to do evil and they don't know how to do good.

We are not talking here about the lost world. We are talking about God's own people.

Judgment Reality #3 - The judgment will feature cosmic catastrophes. **4:23-26**

Jeremiah uses Genesis language here. Just as God created the world and brought beautiful order out of chaos, now His judgment would bring chaos and disorder against His own people.

Jeremiah saw a vision of what the judgments would do to the Promised Land. It would leave the land "formless and void." They could look to heaven, but heaven would not shine its light on them. The mountains were quaking and the hills were moved to and fro.

There was no man left and the birds had fled. The cities were all torn down and land that had been fruitful had become a wilderness.

The totality of this judgment has not yet hit. It is true that the Babylonians attacked and destroyed Jerusalem, but what is described here has not yet completely happened. There is still time for Israel to get right with God.

All of the things described here will occur during the Great Tribulation. The moving of mountains and the strange things with light will occur in the Tribulation and it is here when every bit of this will be fulfilled.

Why did this happen? Why will it happen? The answer is given near the end of **verse 26**: because of the fierce anger of the LORD. God's own people have angered God.

Judgment Reality #4 - The judgment will bring total destruction to the land and people.
4:27-31

God says I am fed up and I will pour out my wrath on the land and the world. God says I will not change My mind on this or turn from this.

I will cause chaos and war and destruction that will kill and destroy. You will cry out to Me and I will not answer.

Do not ever think lightly of your sin or excuse your sin. Face it, confess it and turn from it because there will be serious consequences if you don't.

Now this text clearly warns God's people that if they do not turn away from evil things, He will send destruction upon them.

What should God's people do when they think about the judgment of God? **You have two options:**

- 1) You can personally ignore this - that is what most people in Israel did.**
- 2) You can personally respond to it - that is what most in Israel did not do.**

You can repent and return to the Lord. You can get rid of things that are an abomination to God; you can refocus your life on the word of God and you can pursue a godly life.

Option #1 - will lead to judgment.

Option #2 - will lead to blessings.

You decide yourself what you will do with the "if" clauses.