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SERIES: Jeremiah, Part 2 (God's Certain Judgment)

TITLE: Program 25 – Who Do You Care For?

FRIDAY

OPEN

Are you walking through life and find yourself simply preoccupied with you: with your good, with your welfare, with your well-being and you just care about you? Have you ever looked beyond you to others, dear one? Have you ever thought: What about these people? What is their future? Do they have hope? And have you seen your call from God to minister to them? We'll talk about it today. As we look at God's precepts for life.

PART ONE

We don't like to hear about the judgment of God. We don't like to hear the fact that we are accountable before God for the way that we are living. We get preoccupied with our own world and as long as we're in our own bubble, taking care of ourselves, we're okay. We don't look beyond ourselves. And then suddenly, something happens. Suddenly there's a disaster. And suddenly, we are awakened to a world that is broader than our bubble. And

we see, hey, there is evil reigning in this world and we become frightened. And we think: What are we going to do? We've heard about judgment coming. We've heard about judgment coming. We've also heard: "Oh no, there will be peace. Oh no, God would never allow this to happen." We may hear in the United States of America, "But this is a great nation. But this is a nation that is needed by God because we've sent forth the gospel of Jesus Christ." Or, because we are the democratic nation of the world and we're the leader and all this and that. And we think almost that we're invincible. And because we're invincible, we go back into our bubble where it's all about "moi." It's all about me. And we're just fighting to make "me" happy, to keep "me and my own little people, in my own little bubble," happy. We look at what's on us and about us, and everything, and it does not grieve our hearts because only when it touches us, is it going to cause us pain. We've come to Jeremiah chapter 39. We have come to an account that God has been talking about through Jeremiah since the days of Josiah, since the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah. It is now the reign of Zedekiah. Zedekiah is in his final time as king. And this is what comes to pass. Jeremiah chapter 39, I want you to look at it. And we're going to talk about what God's precepts for life are for us in the light of that. Let me read it to you: **"Now when Jerusalem was captured in the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army came to Jerusalem and laid siege to it; in the eleventh year of Zedekiah...."** (Jeremiah 39:1-2) So you've got these two years of siege. In the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, in the ninth day of the month, the city was breached. The city wall was breached. It was broken down. It was overcome. They came into the city. (See Jeremiah 39:1) The walls could not protect them. And the wall could not protect them because of their sin, because this is what God had ordained. This is the calamity that He had fashioned. Remember, we saw that this week. In Jeremiah chapter 36, he's telling them, he's saying, ["Take a scroll, and this is in the days Jehoiakim, write down all these words, read it to the people."]

(PARAPHRASE, Jeremiah 36:2) **“‘Perhaps...,’”** verse 3, **“...‘the house of Judah will hear [of] all the calamity which I plan to bring on them, in order that every man [may] turn from [their] evil way; [and] I will forgive their iniquity and their sin.’” (Jeremiah 36:3)** I’m bringing the calamity. Who was it that brought the Chaldeans, the Babylonians, down against Jerusalem? It was God. He had said it to His prophet Habakkuk, “I am raising up an army. A terrible, terrible group of people and I am bringing them down as judges on you.” (See Habakkuk 1:6-11) Prophet after prophet had spoken of this day. Prophet after prophet had spoken of this time. And yet, while you heard the prophets that were prophesying the word of God, you had other prophets over here on the other hand that are prophesying: “Oh no, no! Oh no, no, no. Peace, peace, peace.” It says the false prophets prophesied peace and my people love it so. But what will you do in the day of calamity? (See Jeremiah 16:10, 18:17; 36:3, 31) Well, watch what happens. It’s finally here. It says, **“Then all the officials of the king of Babylon came in and sat down at the Middle Gate....” (Jeremiah 39:3)** Now Babylon’s inside the gate. The Jews were sitting in the middle gate at one time. **“...Nergal-sar-ezer, Samgar-nebu, Sar-sekim the Rab-saris...,”** the Rab-saris means the chief official, **“...Nergal-sar-ezer the Rab mag...,”** and the Rab mag simply means a high official, **“...and all the rest of the officials of the king of Babylon.” (Jeremiah 39:3)** I was talking to Tom Hall the other day, and he’s our executive director. And we were in a meeting and he said, “Would you just stop and pray?” And we’re seeking God. And we have an org chart that is so different from every other org chart. Normal org charts have the board of directors and then the CEO and that. Ours are at the bottom and our people are at the top. You are at the top of that because we are ministering to you. Well, I told him the other day. I said, “I decided that you’re the Rab-saris. You are the chief official,” when I was reading this and preparing this lesson to teach you. It says, **“When Zedekiah the king of Judah and all the men of war saw them, they fled and [they] went out of the city at night by way of the king’s garden**

through the gate...,” they had a way of escape planned, **“...between the two walls; and he went out toward the Arabah.” (Jeremiah 39:4)** The Arabah is south of Jerusalem. But this judgment, remember, is of God. This calamity is of God. And it’s a calamity because they have not listened. It’s a calamity because they have not obeyed. The Rechabites just obeyed their forefathers forever and they were rewarded. These people were held up as an example to the children of Israel to obey, to observe what God’s saying. I will spare you. (See Jeremiah 35:18-19) King Zedekiah, as we saw yesterday in chapter 38, could have saved the whole city at the last minute. All he had to do was care about more than him. All he had to do was walk outside that city. All he had to do was surrender. (See Jeremiah 38:17-18) If he had surrendered, the temple would not have been destroyed. If he had surrendered, his palaces wouldn’t have been destroyed. If he had surrendered, if he had surrendered, the city would not have been burned with fire, the walls would not have been broken down. It says, **“But the [armies] of the Chaldeans pursued them and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and they seized him and brought him...to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, and he passed sentence on him.” (Jeremiah 39:5)** The king of Babylon’s up there in Riblah. Look at your map and you will see it. And you say, “Where do I get the map?” Well, you go to preceptsforlife.com and you download our study guide and you’ll have your map, and you’ll see where Riblah is. **“...And he passed sentence on him.” (Jeremiah 39:5)** So they capture him as he’s on his way to the plains of Jericho, as he is on his way to the Arabah. He thinks he can escape and he can’t. And he’s taken to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah and it says, **“Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah...,**” that means he killed them, **“...before his eyes at Riblah....” (Jeremiah 39:6)** Zedekiah is watching and his sons are slain by Nebuchadnezzar. He could have saved himself, if he had gotten out of his own bubble, but remember he was afraid to to obey. He was afraid when he’d be taken to Babylon that the people there would hurt him. (See Jeremiah 38:19) Now listen” You ain’t

heard anything yet. He's standing before Nebuchadnezzar and Nebuchadnezzar is letting him watch as Nebuchadnezzar's men put his sons to death. And then it says, **"...the king of Babylon also slew...the nobles of Judah."** (Jeremiah 39:6) Now these were the nobles of Judah that were trying to persuade Zedekiah that they should kill Jeremiah and get rid of him because he was discouraging the men of war. (See Jeremiah 38:4) They never had a chance of winning. It's the same for me and it's the same for you. You may have a temporary victory. You may have a temporary relief, even as they had when Pharaoh came up and Babylon withdrew, but they came back. (See Jeremiah 37:5) You may have temporary relief in your bubble. But listen, your behavior is bigger than your bubble and you're going to see that when you look at the scriptures, that God holds us accountable for our sense of responsibility towards others. But you know what? I still haven't finished with what happened with Zedekiah. We'll look at that in just a minute. You don't want to miss a word, because it's the Word of God.

PART TWO

It finally happened. Jeremiah had prophesied and prophesied and prophesied. He had prophesied to the king. He had prophesied to the officials. He had prophesied to the people. Now finally it has come to pass. Now, finally, it is transpiring. And Jerusalem has been taken. And Zedekiah thinks that he can escape. He has a plan and he can run and he can hide. But, oh no! There is a God in Heaven that judges us according to our deeds. (See Jeremiah 17:10) We are not saved by our deeds, we are saved by faith, but faith is taking God at His word. Faith is hearing what God says and obeying and living in the light of it. (See Ephesians 2:1-9) Salvation is a salvation of obedience. Believing that God is God and ordering your life as such. So remember they have taken Zedekiah and they have slain his sons before his eyes. They have slain the nobles of Judah. (See Jeremiah 39:6) Now watch

what it says, verse 7 of Jeremiah 39: **“He then blinded Zedekiah’s eyes...bound him in fetters of bronze to bring him to Babylon.”**

(Jeremiah 39:7) He is going to Babylon anyway. He didn’t want to go out and surrender to the king ’cause he was afraid he’d go to Babylon and the Jews in Babylon would torment him, and that’s why he didn’t want to do it.

(See Jeremiah 38:19) **“The fear of man brings a snare....” (Proverbs 29:25)** Oh, what a snare it brought to him! What a snare! Beloved, every time you fear man rather than fearing God it brings a snare. And it brings a feeling of such failure, such failure, if you know God. And it says, **“The Chaldeans also burned with fire the king’s palace and the houses of the people, and they broke down the walls of Jerusalem.” (Jeremiah 39:8)**

Now listen, if Zedekiah had gotten outside his bubble, if he had been concerned for the city, if he had been concerned for the people instead of his own flesh and his own welfare, all of this would have been spared, if only he had listened. You know I meet so many people that wish that they had listened to God, but they didn’t. Instead of trusting God, they went to alcohol, they went to drugs, they went to all these things. And then they’re just in a pit of despair because they did not believe God. It’s like everything destructs, everything’s burned up. It says, **“As for the rest of the people who were left in the city, the deserters who had gone over to him and [to] the rest of the people who remained, Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard carried them into exile in Babylon.” (Jeremiah 39:9)** I mean, they were going to be well off. Remember Jeremiah says, [“When you get to Babylon you pray for the welfare of Babylon.”] (PARAPHRASE, Jeremiah 29:7) [You settle down, you build homes, you plant vineyards. You’re gonna be there.] (PARAPHRASE, Jeremiah 29:5) They’re gonna be there for seventy years. We know that. (See Jeremiah 25:11-12) We’ve seen it. But, he says, you settle down. They were better off there than they were in the city where they were eating their own children. As for the rest of the people? (See Jeremiah 19:9) Well, it says **“But some of the...people...,”** verse 10: **“... the poorest people who had nothing, ...[were] left behind**

in the land of Judah, and [he] gave them vineyards and fields at that time.” (Jeremiah 39:10) I mean, they were better off. They were given vineyards and fields. They could go out and get them. “Now Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon gave orders about Jeremiah through Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard, saying, ‘Take him and look after him...do nothing harmful to him, but rather deal with him just as he tells you.’” (Jeremiah 39:11-12) Whatever Jeremiah wants, give it to him. Now that is really something! And you have to stop and think about this. Tommye Hammel who is a very close friend, an intimate friend of mine, and we’ve been in this ministry for years and this is not a woman’s ministry. Most of our leadership is male. But Tommye and I were discussing this. We, we take teaching tours to Greece. And we teach ah Philippians in Philippi, Thessalonians in Thessaloniki, etc. etc. etc., and Revelation on the Isle of Patmos, Ephesians in Ephesus. We do all this. And we were sitting on the plane and we were talking about this. And the thing that she pointed out is, she said: “Did you notice that Nebuchadnezzar, himself, is giving instructions about Jeremiah?” Nebuchadnezzar knows about Jeremiah. Nebuchadnezzar had Daniel in his court. Daniel read the letters from Jeremiah. Daniel knew about the captivity and how long it would be. And here is protection. This is what I want you to see. Zedekiah doesn’t listen, he ends up with his sons being slain, the nobles being slain, everything he has destroyed, being blinded and taken to Babylon after all. Now he says, “**They even sent and took Jeremiah out of the court of the guardhouse and entrusted him to Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, to take him home. So he stayed among the people. Now the word of the LORD had come to Jeremiah while he was confined in the court of the guardhouse...,**” (Jeremiah 39:14-15) before this time, before the siege, “...saying, ‘Go and speak to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Behold, I am about to bring My words on this city for disaster and not for prosperity; and they will take place before you on that day. But I will deliver you on that

day'....'" (Jeremiah 39:15-17) In the courthouse before the siege came, God was promising Ebed-melech that although the city would be taken and people would be destroyed, he would be rescued. **"...I will deliver you on that day,' declares the LORD, 'And you will not be given into the hand of the men whom you dread. For I will certainly rescue you, and you will not fall by the sword; but you will have your own life as booty, because you...trusted in Me,' [says] the LORD."** (Jeremiah 39:17-18) Remember Ebed-melech got out of his bubble and he was concerned about Jeremiah being in that cistern, being in that mud and he was the one that rescued him. He was the one that risked the ire of the king. He was the one. And what you see here is you see God taking care of Jeremiah. You see, God taking care of Ebed-melech. You see God, taking care of the Rechabites, why, because they were people of integrity, because they listened, because they observed, because they obeyed. (See Jeremiah 35:18) And that is God's word to you today. In Ezekiel, which we will study, in Ezekiel chapter 9, he talks about people that sigh and groan over all the abominations being committed in their midst, outside their bubble. And in Ezekiel 9, he tells how he is going to spare those people. (See Ezekiel 9:4) Oh Beloved, don't live in your own bubble, because your bubble is influenced by the world around you. You need to remember that you need to get out of that. You need to stand for God. You need to remember that you are to be a spokesman for God. That **"...[you are to proclaim His] word... in season [and] out of season; [that you are to] reprove, [and] rebuke [and] exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."** (2 Timothy 4:2) **"...That you are not your own...[that] you have been bought with a price...[and that you are to] glorify God in your body."** (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) You are to be a Jeremiah for today.