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SERIES: Jeremiah, Part 1 (Return To Me)

TITLE: Program 3 – Running On Empty

WEDNESDAY

OPEN

Do you ever feel empty, I mean gut level empty? You look at life and you think, what is it all about? It's, it's vanity. It's vain. It has no meaning. It has no substance. Oh Precious One, I understand because so many lives are empty. Do you know why? Because you're walking after emptiness, there's more to life than emptiness and vanity. We'll talk about it today.

PART ONE

God says, ["What injustice did you find in Me that you walked away from Me? And you got emptiness. What was it? What caused your life to be empty?"] (PARAPHRASE, Jeremiah 2:5) I will tell you this, Precious One, it is a lack of God in your life. It's when you turn from God to your thing, to your life, to your direction, to your goals, to your ambition. I promise you, if you will listen carefully to the Word of God, it will keep you from walking in emptiness. It will keep you from feeling empty. This is what we want to

JEREMIAH, PART 1 (RETURN TO ME)

PROGRAM 3 (#912003)

WEEK 1 (912301)

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talk about today. We're studying the book of Jeremiah. We have two more verses in Jeremiah chapter 1 to listen to, and then we come to the message that God has for Israel, the message when He says, "...[You] **walked after emptiness and [you] became empty.**" (**Jeremiah 2:5**) What I want you to see and understand is that God has a purpose for you listening. And studying with me. And that purpose is for you to listen to, to hear the Word of the Lord, and then take that Word of God inside of you, and then taking it inside of you to live in the light of it. So let's go back to Jeremiah chapter 1. Now remember, it is the 13th year of Josiah. Josiah is the king. He has not yet found the Word of God, which has gotten lost in the house of God. But God has commissioned Jeremiah. God has told, ["Jeremiah, I want you to go, and you are going to be My prophet to the nations. You are going to tear down. You are going to pluck up. You are going to destroy. You are going to overthrow. But you're also going to build and to plant. You're going to let the people know that a boiling pot is coming out of the north, and Jerusalem is going to be besieged."] (PARAPHRASE, Jeremiah 1:5-10) These nations from the north, and it's really Babylon, but Babylon has to come in from the north because there's a desert between Babylon and the land of Israel. "So they're going to come in from the north. They're going to set up their thrones. They're going to besiege you. And you have got to take My Word, and you have got to deliver it to Israel. And you've got to deliver it to the nations." Now it's a word of judgment. It is a word of the fact that the prophecies that have been spoken are now going to come to pass. You're going to see that God doesn't want it to happen. But He's telling the people, "If you don't repent, if you don't return..." And those are gonna be key words. Key words are words that unlock the meaning of the text. And He says, "If you don't come back to Me, then this is what's going to happen. You think you got emptiness now? It's going to be far more empty in your life because I'm the only One that can satisfy." So as He gives Jeremiah this commission, then this is what He says in verse 16, "**I will pronounce My**

judgments on them....” And He’s talking about Israel. He says,
“...concerning all their wickedness....” (Jeremiah 1:16) Now if you just stop and think, OK the Word of God, this was written back in the 600’s, OK because Josiah was ruling from 640-609 B.C. And as he ruled there at that time, God is telling them that He is going to pronounce His judgments upon them concerning their wickedness. They had known rank wickedness under the reign of Manasseh. Manasseh rules for a long time, and no king does more evil in all of the nation of Israel total, than Manasseh. And then on top of that, his son Amon comes to power. He’s in power for two years. God kills him. And you can read about all this in 2 Chronicles chapter 33. And then Josiah comes to the throne when he is eight years old. Josiah is different than his father. He’s different than his grandfather. What is the message? The message is, your heritage does not define you. Don’t let anyone tell you, don’t let any psychologist, any psychiatrist say, “Hey, you are the way you are because of your heritage.” No, you are the way you are because of the choices you’ve made. You go after emptiness, you’ll find yourself empty. That’s just a fact. You are not defined by your past. You say, “But my past was horrible. It damaged me.” Listen, God is in the business of healing. As a matter of fact, later on in Jeremiah, you’re going to see Jeremiah crying, **“Heal me, O LORD, and I will be healed; save me [O God] and I will be saved....” (Jeremiah 17:14)** You don’t have to be empty. You don’t have to consider yourself damaged goods. And so they’re in wickedness. And He’s gonna tell us three things. We saw this in our last program. Number one, they have forsaken Me, and two, they have offered sacrifices to idols. (See Jeremiah 1:16) Now the first commandment in Exodus chapter 20, in those first six verses is summarized this way, [“I am God. There is no other. And I am a jealous God. And I don’t want you worshipping any other god. I don’t want you to make any image of any likeness in the heaven above and the earth beneath or under the earth. I don’t want you bowing down to them. And I don’t want you worshipping them.”] (PARAPHRASE, Exodus 20:2-

5) So they've gone after wickedness. They've forsaken God, and when you forsake God there's a void. There's an emptiness. So what do you do? You try to fill it with something. Now they were filling it with idols. We fill it with idols. An idol is anything that gets between you and God. So they were going after idols. Idols, other gods, small g-o-d-s, all of that speaks to idolatry. So every time you read through the text of Jeremiah, and you come to anything that talks about other "gods" or "Baal," who was a false god, or "idols," just put a big "I" there. And just know this, I'm talking about the letter, "I" and just know this that "I" is there when the one true God is not in your life. And what does that lead to? Well that leads to emptiness. OK, so then He says, **"...And [you have] worshiped the works of [your] hands."** (**Jeremiah 1:16**) That's why many of you feel so empty. You've walked after emptiness. Listen, you cannot leave God out of your life. You can't leave God out of your life! You just can't do it. Because when you do, Precious One, what you do is you create a void in your life. You create a huge void. So you walk after emptiness. Why? Because you are so busy running here, doing this, doing that. You're tired. You're exhausted. You come home. If you're a woman, you've got the kids to take care of, you've got the house, you've got the responsibilities. Why? Because what we've done is we've walked after the works of our hands, and consequently we have neglected God. So this is the state of the people. Now what people? How many people have been affected this way? Well look at what Jeremiah says. Let's go on. God is speaking. He says, **"Now, gird up your loins...."** (**Jeremiah 1:17**) And when He's talking about girding up their loins, they wore a robe. And He's saying, "I want you to reach down. And I want you to get the back of that robe. And I want you to pull it up, and I want you to tuck it into your belt because you're gonna take off. I've got a job for you to do." So **"...gird up your loins and arise....speak to them all which I command you...."** (**Jeremiah 1:17**) Now the problem today is, so many of us don't know what God commands because we're so busy

going after the works of our own hands, we have so many idols that God doesn't have a place in our lives. He says, **“...Do not be dismayed before them....”** (Jeremiah 1:17) You speak everything that I've commanded you to do, and don't be dismayed before them. I want you to know there are times when I literally thought before I got up to speak, I was gonna have a heart attack. I spoke once at a breakfast, and there were lots of Jewish people. I had a message on my heart. I thought I was gonna have a heart attack. I spoke once in Chattanooga to the fathers of Chattanooga. God had given me a very hard message. I thought I was gonna have a heart attack. I spoke to Campus Crusade Portland Student Conference. All the way out there on that long trip, I had nausea, I had pain. I thought, God, I've got to have Your message! And it was face to face with God! Well if your face to face with God, it's not oh just welcome. He's not a sugar-daddy. He's an almighty God. He's a righteous and holy God. God moved and 58 students came to know Jesus Christ. And it was exciting. But I'm telling you, you can get dismayed by their faces. And He says, [“Don't be dismayed by them because if you are I will dismay you by them.”] (PARAPHRASE, Jeremiah 1:17) He says, **“...you before them....,”** (Jeremiah 1:17) excuse me. He says, **“Now behold, I have made you today as a fortified city and...a pillar of iron and...walls of bronze against the whole land....”** (Jeremiah 1:18) Now catch this! What He's saying here is, OK, you're like a fortified city, and there are the people out there. And those people are coming against you. You're to be like a fortified city. You're gonna be. They're gonna come after you. They're gonna rage. They're gonna fight you. But I want to tell you something. I'm with you. And He says, “I have made you like a bronze wall.” I mean, talk about hitting a wall! You're hitting a bronze wall. So He says, [“I have made you like a bronze wall, against the whole land.”] (PARAPHRASE, Jeremiah 1:18) Now watch what He says, **“...to the kings of Judah, to its princes, to its priests and to the people of the land.”** (Jeremiah 1:18) You're gonna get opposition from

the top down. You're going to go and give this message to these people that are empty because they've walked after emptiness. You're gonna call them back to me and I want to tell you something, a lot of them aren't going to like it. Now are you still ready to be a Jeremiah? You say, "I got to think about this." You think about it, and we'll be right back.

PART TWO

You know what? I absolutely love being your teacher! And I love hearing from you. I love to get my emails. I love to have you go online and send me a message. And it is such an encouragement. And I want to thank those of you that support this program because you know the times we're living in. I mean if this is a value to you, then it has to be supported so that we can do this. This is the way God ordains it. So thank you so very much. And I just pray that you have caught already in this first week of Jeremiah the fact that God wants you, to be Jeremiah's. God wants to raise up a host, an army, an elite force of Jeremiah's. And it's an elite force because you have to be willing to suffer. Listen to what God says to Jeremiah. Jeremiah chapter 1, verse 18, **"...I have made you today as a fortified city...as a pillar of iron and...walls of bronze against the whole land to the kings of Judah, to...princes, to...priests...to the people of the land. They will fight against you...."** (Jeremiah 1:18-19) This is why it's an elite force. And let me just stop here and say, elite force, if you're gonna give everything that God has commanded you, if you're gonna be His spokesman, His spokeswoman, then you've got to know the truth. And that's why we want you to go to the website preceptsforlife.com, preceptsforlife.com and find out how you can study the Word of God so that when people fight against you, you will know this, **"...if God be for us, who can be against us?"** (Romans 8:31, KJV) **"...God [has] not given us the spirit of fear..."** 2 Timothy 1:7, **"...but...power, and...love, and...a sound mind."** (2 Timothy 1:7, KJV) So this is what He's calling us to, OK? Now Jeremiah is

going to find himself, and your gonna study it, in some really hard places. And he needs to remember this. And this is why it's important as you go through Jeremiah with me, ask God is there a verse that I should memorize? Is there a verse that I should print out and have before me? Do you know that I have Jeremiah chapter 1, verse 17 the second part of the verse framed? **“...Do not be dismayed before them, or I will dismay you before them.” (Jeremiah 1:17)** Now I have the King James, [don't be dismayed by their faces.] (PARAPHRASE, Jeremiah 1:17, KJV) In other words, don't look at their faces. Look to the face of God. So now we come to chapter 2. It says, **“Now the word of the LORD came to me saying.” (Jeremiah 2:1)** And once again, you want to mark “the Word of the Lord.” If you don't know how, it's on your study guide. **“Go [I want you to go. I want you to] proclaim in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, “Thus says the LORD....”” (Jeremiah 2:2)** Now you say, “But I can't do that because God really doesn't speak to me.” Listen, God does every time you open this Book! God is speaking. These are the pure words of God. This is absolute, unadulterated truth. So, Precious One, what He's saying to you here is, **“Go...proclaim in the ears of Jerusalem...“Thus says the LORD....”” (Jeremiah 2:2)** And what's He gonna say? He says, **“...I remember concerning you the devotion of your youth, the love of your betrothals....” (Jeremiah 2:2)** He says, “I remember when we first got together. I remember. **““...your following after Me in the wilderness, through a land not sown.”” (Jeremiah 2:2)** I took you through the deserts, and you just followed Me. What is He referring to? He's referring to the time when He took them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. I mean they were slaves and He set them free. I remember July 16th, 1963 when He set me free. And He set me free. And the Bible says if [the Lord shall set you free, you shall be free indeed.] (PARAPHRASE, John 8:36) So He says, “I remember you. I remember how you followed Me. I remember your betrothal to Me.” And then He says this, **“Israel was holy to the LORD....”** You were set apart

to the Lord. **“...the first of His harvest....” (Jeremiah 2:3)** Now listen to the play on words. Listen to what He’s doing because He’s connecting them with the Torah. He’s connecting them with the first books of the Bible. He’s connecting them with the Law, which is the way that they should walk. He says, **“Israel was holy to the LORD, the first of His harvest. All who ate of it became guilty; evil came upon them,” declares the LORD.”**

(Jeremiah 2:3) What is He talking about? He says, you’re the first of the harvest. The first of the harvest is the first fruits. Now listen, under the Levitical Law, the first fruits belong to the Lord. So you gave God the first of your product. That was not eaten by you. It was reserved for God. And if anybody took the first fruits and took them to themselves, now listen, if they did that they were guilty. And this is what He’s saying: You were my first fruits. You were the first fruits of My harvest. Romans chapter 1, verse 16 says that the gospel came to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. (See Romans 1:16) So here they are the first fruit also. Anybody that touches you becomes guilty because you belong to Me. Now watch what these people who belong to Him did. It says, **“Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel. Thus says the LORD, ‘What injustice did [you] find in Me, that [you walked] far from Me....’”**

(Jeremiah 2:4-5) What was it that cause you to get up and to turn your back on Me and walk far away from Me? What’s wrong with Me? Am I not loving? Am I not kind? Did I not provide for you? Why did you do this? He says, **“...they walked after emptiness...,”** they walked after emptiness, **“...and [they] became empty?”** **(Jeremiah 2:5)** You, if you’re feeling empty, I guarantee you it’s because you’ve walked away from God. Or if you’re feeling empty and you never feel satisfied, it’s because you haven’t walked back to God. There He sits with arms open wide, as wide as Jesus Christ hanging on a cross, as wide as crucifixion love. **“...God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son....” (John 3:16, KJV)** He says, and you won’t come to Me? **“[You’ve] walked after emptiness and**

you became empty.” (Jeremiah 2:5) Now the word for “empty” and “emptiness” is “vanity.” And it means it was in vain! “In vain” means it was useless. It had no purpose. Now listen to what He says, **“They did not say, “Where is the LORD Who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, who led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and pits, through a land of drought and...deep darkness, through a land that no one crossed and where no man dwelt?”” (Jeremiah 2:6)** God led us there. He says, **“I brought you into the fruitful land to eat its fruit[s] and its good things. But you came and defiled My land, and My inheritance you [have] made an abomination.” (Jeremiah 2:7)** I want to tell you, America is filthy. America is greatly defiled. We are blatant in our immorality, in our homosexuality, in our covetousness, in our lying, in our stealing, in our rebellion, in our love of the things of the world. And you know what? He says, **“The priests did not say, “Where is the LORD...?”” (Jeremiah 2:8)** Now listen, you and I are a kingdom of priests unto God, and we’re to say, “Where is the Lord? Why are you walking after emptiness? Come on, and let me tell you how to be full, and satisfied, and have a purpose.”