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

TITLE: Program 31 – Don't Seek Greatness!

MONDAY

OPEN

Somehow we want to be great, don't we? We want somebody to recognize us, somebody to acknowledge us. We want to be popular, we have dreams. Are we looking though for greatness for ourselves? If we are, God has a word for us today. Especially in the light of what's on the horizon politically and nationally.

PART ONE

In Jeremiah chapter 45 we find this question: “...**Are you seeking [greatness] for yourself...? (Jeremiah 45:5)** Have you followed the news? Do you watch those people that get behind someone else when they're speaking, or they're interviewing them? They keep moving over because they want to be on the camera and they want to be recognized. They were seeking greatness for themselves. You say, “I would never do anything like that.” I agree. But are there other things that you would do in seeking

greatness for yourself? In other words, Precious One, are you preoccupied with you? Are you concerned about your well-being? Are you concerned about your pain? Are you concerned about your weariness? Is it all about you? You gotta be careful. We're gonna talk about that today. Do you realize that we have only one more week after this and we will be finished with the book of Jeremiah? It's been a long venture, hasn't it? And we've gone through ever chapter verse by verse. I've read it to you. Well, I'm about to read you some more chapters and go through it verse by verse and explain it as best I can in the time I have. And I want you to know, there are lots of big words in here. Lots of names of cities that I don't know how to pronounce, but I can tell you this, that as we look at God's word to the nations, God has a message for you and me who are living in these last days, and who are headed, I believe, towards the beginning of the end. So we need to pay attention. Let's go to Jeremiah chapter 45. Now in Jeremiah chapter 45 we go back to the fourth year of Jehoiakim. Now remember Jehoiakim, if you have an inductive study Bible, and I do pray that you've gotten one. But if you have an "Inductive Study Bible," what you have in Jeremiah chapter 1 are the last kings of Judah. And so you have a list of those kings. The first king is Josiah who was from 640 to 609 B.C. And things were pretty good during the days of Josiah, because in the eighteenth year of Josiah they found the Word of God that had gotten lost in the house of God. Jeremiah begins prophesying in the thirteenth year of Josiah, five years before they find the Word of God. The next king is Jehoahaz, and he is just in power for a very, very short time, not even a year. He's in power in 609 B.C. And then you have Jehoiakim coming to power. And when Jehoiakim is ruling, he rules longer. He rules from 609 to 597 B.C. He dies just before the second siege of Jerusalem by the king of Babylon. So it is the fourth year of Jehoiakim. Now, Jehoiakim is followed by Jehoiachin or Coniah, or Jeconiah, and he only reigns a very short time (just months) and then he's taken. Then you have Zedekiah, and Zedekiah is the final king. As we look

at Jeremiah chapter 45 through 49 this week, you're going to see the mention of Jehoiakim and you're gonna see the mention of Zedekiah. But as you look at it, what you need to remember is, that this book is not laid out chronologically. It's laid out thematically. God has a purpose in putting certain chapters together and tying events together because He has a message. And I believe that the message that He has for us is in Jeremiah chapter 45 through 49. And the message is: Don't seek greatness for yourself. He's going to say it to an individual in chapter 45, which is Baruch. (See Jeremiah 45:5) And He's going to say it to the nations in chapters 46 to 49. Now next week, we're going to be in chapter 50 and 51 and 52. And 50 and 51 have to do with Babylon. And what we're going to do is, we're going to look at those Scriptures and we're gonna jump all the way into the future. All of this should spark your interest because modern day Iraq is where Babylon is, and so the two are tied together. All right, Jeremiah chapter 45 verse 1: **"This is the message which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to Baruch the son of Neriah, when he had written down these words in a book at Jeremiah's dictation, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim...son of Josiah, king of Judah...."** (Jeremiah 45:1) So this is the fourth year of Jehoiakim. And we're going to look at that fourth year 'cause we are told in Jeremiah 25 and in Jeremiah 36 the things that happen in the fourth year. (See Jeremiah 25:1; Jeremiah 36:1) But what we're seeing now is, we're seeing God give a word to Baruch. Now, Baruch was the one who came along and who was in essence the scribe for Jeremiah, and so let me just read the verses and then we'll go back and look at it. It says: **"Thus says the LORD...God of Israel to you, O Baruch: 'You said....'"** (Jeremiah 45:2-3) You know, God knows everything we've said. God knows what you said in that argument; God knows what you said in order to get out of something. God knows if you lie, God knows if you tell the truth. There's no hiding your words as well as your behavior. There's no hiding anything from God. He says in Psalm 139: ["You know before a word is even formed on my

tongue. You know it. You know what I'm going to say.'](PARAPHRASE, Psalm 139:4) So God is saying to Baruch through Jeremiah, **"Thus says the LORD..., O Baruch: 'You said, "Ah, woe is me! For the LORD has added sorrow to my pain; I am weary with my groaning and [I] have found no rest.'"**" (Jeremiah 45:2-3) "I'm just miserable, just absolutely miserable." Now watch the pronouns: "Woe is me." "I am in pain." **"I am weary with my groaning and have found no rest."** (Jeremiah 45:3) And then God speaks and He says, **"Thus you are to say to him...."** This is what he said, and this is what I want you to say to him: **"Behold, what I have built I am about to tear down, and what I have planted I am about to uproot, that is, the whole land."** (Jeremiah 45:4) In other words, we have read in Jeremiah chapter 39 about God tearing down what He has built. We have read in Jeremiah 39: God uprooting what he has planted. We have read in Jeremiah 39 already about the destruction of Jerusalem. (See Jeremiah 39:1-9) But you see Jehoiakim takes us back to even before, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim which was 605 B.C. It takes us back to just before Nebuchadnezzar comes down against Jerusalem and takes Daniel and Shadrach and Meshach and Abed-nego and the boys into captivity. It's before 597 B.C. when 10,000 are marched away to Babylon into captivity. It is before as I said 586 B.C. when Jerusalem is leveled. So we go back now to the third king under Jeremiah's time. And Jeremiah in his fourth year is writing now these things down on a scroll. (See Jeremiah 45:1) And here is Baruch and he is complaining, and it is all about him. And God says, "You're saying that. Do you know what I'm about to do? I'm about to destroy Jerusalem." And then this is what He says and I don't want you to miss it because it is in essence going to be our theme all week long. He says, **"But you [you Baruch], are you seeking great things for yourself...?"** (Jeremiah 45:5) "I'm about to destroy everything and you're talking about how weary you are? You're talking about how great your sorrow is? I understand, but I want to ask you a question: Are you seeking great things

for yourself?” What is God doing? He is getting in Baruch’s face. You know, sometimes God has to get in our face because we’re so focused on us. We’re so focused on our happiness, or our lack of happiness. We are so focused on our tiredness, our weariness. We’re just worn out with life, and I can understand because there is too much going on in our lives and so we are weary! And so what are we saying? We are saying ah, “I’m so weary, I am so tired. I’ve just got sorrow upon sorrow.” And you know what? We get myopic. We look at this narrow bit of our own lives and you know what we miss? We miss the big picture. The big picture of what’s going on in the world. The big picture of what’s going on in history. The big picture of the status of man and what’s happening in the nations. And this is what He says: **“But...are you seeking great things for yourself...?”** Then he makes this statement. **“...Do not seek them....”** Stop it! Stop it! He says, **“...For behold, I am going to bring disaster on all flesh,’ declares the LORD, ‘But I will give your life to you as booty in all the places where you may go.”** (Jeremiah 45:5) Listen, quit. I am going to spare your life. Now are you seeking greatness for yourself? We’ll talk about it more in just a minute.

PART TWO

We’re all about achievement, aren’t we? If we didn’t achieve we especially want our kids to achieve. Or if we achieved, we expect them to achieve. We’re all about achievement. And not just the United States of America, but if you look at the societies of Korea and Japan and the Asian countries, it’s about achievement. If you read about what’s happening in Russia, you read about all these people that have made an absolute fortune, things that you didn’t read about during the era of communism. And it’s all about achievement. Well, Baruch was from a family that had achieved. His grandfather, you might want to put this down: 2 Chronicles 34:8 was the governor of Jerusalem. And Jeremiah 51:59 is going to tell us that Baruch’s brother was an officer under Zedekiah in Zedekiah’s court. (See Jeremiah

51:59) So here he is from a family of achievers. Who has he united himself with? Well, he has united himself with a loser. Now Jeremiah is not really a loser, but if you look through the eyes of society, they look at Jeremiah and, I mean, they just want to go “Hah! Hah!” They just want to turn their backs on Jeremiah. Why? Because Jeremiah is unpopular, because Jeremiah has a message that the people don’t like. The other prophets have enough sense, they think, to say, “...**Peace, peace....**” (**Jeremiah 6:14**) “...**And my people love...it so....**” (**Jeremiah 5:31**) It says, “**The prophets prophesy falsely...[and my people love it so]....**” (**Jeremiah 5:31**) So if they love the false prophets, they hate the true prophet. So Jeremiah is not allowed to go to weddings, he’s not allowed to go to funerals, he is not allowed to be at a party, he’s not allowed to get married; this poor man. This poor man. And you’ve read enough of his life to know that it has been very, very hard. There was a time when Jeremiah said, “Not gonna talk anymore. I am not going to talk anymore. I am just gonna sit down and I’m gonna shut up. I’m not gonna talk. I’ve got to; I’ve got to, because it’s like a fire in my bones, and I’ve got to speak.” (See Jeremiah 20:9) The hand of the Lord was heavy on Jeremiah. And you would hear Jeremiah saying, “Oh, oh I wish I hadn’t been born.” (See Jeremiah 20:14-15) You would hear Jeremiah going through these things, but it wouldn’t stick. Jeremiah knew his calling from God and Jeremiah stood fast, but he didn’t stand alone. For the first time in Jeremiah chapter 32 you meet Baruch. When you meet him he’s coming to take care of a deed that Jeremiah signed in order to buy the property of his uncle, and put it in jars to keep that title deed to that land. And you read about Baruch, and you read about him taking care of all this business. (See Jeremiah 32:8) So you see Baruch connected with Jeremiah. Then you get to Jeremiah chapter 36, and God tells Jeremiah, [“Write on a scroll everything that I have been telling these people for the past 23 years.”] (PARAPHRASE, Jeremiah 36:2) “I want you to write it on a scroll and then I want you to read it to the people.” (See Jeremiah 36:3-6) Well, the one

that's going to do the writing is Baruch. He's going to take the dictation from Jeremiah, He's going to then take what he writes on that scroll, and he's going to go to the temple mount. And it's a fast day and he's going to stand there and he's going to read it to the people. He does this in the fifth year of Jehoiakim. (See Jeremiah 36:9) Now by the fifth year of Jehoiakim, they have already had the first attack from Nebuchadnezzar. So he stands there and he reads it, and he tells them what is going to happen. He's a spokesman from God he has the privilege of not only writing down the very words that God is giving Jeremiah so that he is recording the words to God, but he also has the privilege of taking those words and reading them to the people that have come there to the Temple. That's quite an honor. Now, when he reads them though he is told, "You better get out of town. You better hide, because if the king hears these words he's gonna come after you. (See Jeremiah 36:19) Well the king gets hold of the scroll, and the king as you remember, cuts it up piece by piece as he is listening to it. He's sitting in his house it's winter, there's a little fire going on in the brazier, and so he just gets up, takes his knife, cuts off part of it, throws it in the fire, sits back down and they read more until eventually all of Baruch's work is gone up in flames, it's just ashes. (See Jeremiah 36:22-23) So then Baruch goes back and tell him what happens and Jeremiah finds out what's happened, and so then Jeremiah has him write it again and he adds even more words. (See Jeremiah 36:32) Now this is what Baruch is doing, and God is saying to Baruch: ["Baruch, don't seek greatness for yourself. Don't seek greatness. I've given you your life."] (PARAPHRASE, Jeremiah 45:5) "You're to take your life and you are to use it for Me. You are to use it for My glory." You know, when Jesus called His disciples in Matthew. And He said, "...**If anyone [wants] to come after Me, [let him] deny himself...take up his cross and follow Me....**" (Matthew 16:24) [He that will lose his life for My sake], He that will not seek greatness, he that will not seek his will, he that will do My will, he that will consider himself dead to his own desires

and own pleasures, [he that will lose his life will find it.] (PARAPHRASE, Matthew 16:25) Don't seek greatness for yourself. And you see this was the problem. Sometimes we only want to serve God if we can be on the platform. We only want to serve God if we can be recognized, if we can be known. And if our name doesn't get in the church bulletin then, "I'm not gonna do that anymore. They just don't appreciate me." So this is God's message to us. Are you seeking greatness for yourself? (See Jeremiah 45:5) Well when you look at this. We have to look at the times in which we are living. We are living in a time of arrogance. And you are going to see that word used now throughout this week as we look at God as He talks to the nations. We're living at a time when we are so arrogant that we are changing laws. What was once considered illegal, we are saying it's legal. Once adultery, immorality, homosexuality was considered breaking the law. Now what are we doing? We're trying to change the laws. That is arrogance. Anyone that comes along that is a president of the United States of America or a senator or a congressman or a supreme court judge, or anything that sits in judgment on what the Word of God has to say, they are trying to change the laws. That, Beloved, is arrogance. That is, in a sense, claiming greatness for yourself, that you can sit in judgment upon the Word of God. We have disregarded God, we are trying to break His fetters, we are taking the Word of God we are twisting it, we are altering it to make it fit our lifestyle. You know what? We are seeking greatness for ourselves instead of seeking the will of God. And where does it lead? It leads to judgment. We'll be talking about it all this week.