

The Coming Judgement

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[0 : 01] Two years ago, in the Social, Psychological, and Personality Science Journal, researchers Ben Tappan and Ryan McKay from University of London published an article entitled, The Illusion of Moral Superiority.

According to the findings of their study, while people have a general tendency to overestimate their positive qualities with regard to other people, and for example, their different abilities, skills, their sociability, they tend to estimate that they're better than the average in general.

When it comes to the estimation of their morality, people's illusions were significantly more pronounced and prevalent. In other words, most people in the world consider themselves to be morally superior to the average person.

The researchers concluded that this is a dangerous illusion because self-righteous people who are convinced of their moral superiority are likely to escalate a conflict rather than cooperate or compromise.

This self-righteousness, in fact, is at the root of much conflict in this world, including relational strife, political discord, and even international warfare. And in our court system, right, when a judge is personally interested in or implicated by a case, he is required to recuse himself from the case due to the concern that he cannot render judgment impartially.

[1 : 27] Yet when it comes to judging our own morality, most of us are delusional. And we think that we can be an accurate and objective judge. And this is why it is important to set aside our own perception of how moral we are and let God, who knows all and sees all, to be our judge.

And here in Jeremiah chapter 4 to 6, we see God's judgment of Judah and Israel. And his verdict is devastating. And God's verdict is a fitting description, not just of Judah and Israel in this time period, but of all people and of all sinners, every single human being that has ever lived except for one. And no one likes to hear that he or she is a sinner. But until you have an accurate assessment of the problem, you cannot search for an appropriate solution to it. And that's why this passage is included here in God's word.

Because it's only after accepting God's devastating verdict that we can appreciate his extravagant mercy. So the main point of my sermon this morning is that we must turn to Christ for salvation, for we are all under God's judgment for our sins.

And I will talk about that in three parts. First, the warning of judgment. Second, the warrant for judgment. And third, the withholding of judgment. So at the beginning of chapter 4, God exhorted his people to repent, lest his wrath go forth like fire.

[2 : 56] But they did not respond by repenting. And so here in the rest of this chapter 4, we find God's warning of impending judgment. So look at verses 5 to 8, where God announces this in poetic form.

Read with me. Verses 5 to 8. Blow the trumpet through the land. Cry aloud and say, assemble and let us go into the fortified cities. Raise a standard towards Zion. Flee for safety.

Stay not. For I bring disaster from the north and great destruction. A lion has gone up from his thicket. A destroyer of nations has set out. He has gone out from his place to make your land a waste.

Your cities will be ruins without inhabitant. For this, put on sackcloth, lament and wail. For the fierce anger of the Lord has not turned back from us.

So the blowing a trumpet is announcing of an emergency, right? And so it's prompting all the citizens to take, to hide in the fortified walls, behind the fortified walls. And the word translated standard can also mean a signal.

[3 : 55] So it could either be a very large flag that they raise that people can see from other cities to take warning. Or it could be a signal like the fire signals that ancient kingdoms used to use. I don't know if you've seen Lord of the Rings where, you know, it's maybe like the beacon of Gondor, right?

And it's like the Lord of the Rings where they set fire and everybody sees and takes warning. That's the kind of signal that's probably in view here. And the Babylonians are coming. They're compared to a lion.

And they will reduce Israel and Judah to ruins. And so the fierce anger of the Lord, he says, has not turned back from them. Remember that that's a key word in this book.

Return, turn back. God's repeatedly telling his people to turn back to him, to return to him. But because they have not turned back to him, he now says the Lord's anger also has not turned back from you because of the absence of repentance.

In light of this impending judgment, Jeremiah expresses his indignation to God in verse 10. Ah, Lord God, surely you have utterly deceived this people in Jerusalem saying, it shall be well with you.

[4 : 58] Whereas the sword has reached their very life. Of course, Jeremiah doesn't really mean that God is deceiving his people. It's a well-established truth that Old Testament believers knew that God never lies.

That Numbers 23 to 19 says, God is not man that he should lie or son of man that he should change his mind. But it sure seemed like God deceived his people. And the reason for that is because the false prophets had repeatedly assured God's people that it shall be well with them, that everything's going to be okay, that this is all temporary, that everything's going to improve and things are going to get better and God is still with them.

But because of these false prophets who had spoken to them and falsely assured them, it seemed as if God himself was deceiving his people, even though judgment was right at their doorsteps. And with a series of kind of illustrative analogies, then God warns his people of this judgment in verses 11 to 18.

First, in verses 11 to 13, this coming invasion from the north is described as a hot wind that does not winnow or cleanse. So what that means is that farmers in this era, right, they winnowed their grain by tossing it into the air so that the wind blows upon it and all the chaff and the stuff that you don't want along with your grain is blown away and they have the rest of the grain to take with them, right?

So that's the idea. So the wind in that sense was good for the farmers. But here, the wind that is coming, this invasion that is coming from the north is not a wind. It's a hot wind that does not winnow or cleanse.

[6 : 29] It says in verse 12 that it's a wind that's too full for this. It's like a storm, like a dust storm that comes, right? It's wind that is too forceful. So instead of winnowing the grain, it blows away all the grain along with the chaff.

That's the kind of wind that is coming and the judgment that is coming from the north will not winnow. It will not take away the evil people. No, it will take away the good along with the bad. It will bring total judgment on these people.

And verse 13 continues that powerful image of that powerful storm. It says, behold, he comes up like clouds. He's chariots like the whirlwind. His horses are swifter than eagles.

Woe to us for we are ruined. And upon learning of this, we see Jeremiah's anguish in verses 19 to 21. Read with me. My anguish, my anguish, I writhe in pain.

Oh, the walls of my heart, my heart is beating wildly. I cannot keep silent. For I hear the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. Crash follows hard on crash. The whole land is laid waste.

[7 : 32] Suddenly my tents are laid waste. My curtains in a moment. How long must I see the standard and hear the sound of the trumpet? So this is an invasion that hasn't taken place yet.

So Jeremiah is either seeing a vision here or he is seeing and hearing things in his mind's eye and ear. And he's so upset and so vexed by this impending invasion.

And his mind is so preoccupied with it. It's as if the invasion is right at his tent, breaking down his tent and his heart's beating wildly. And then in verse 22, we break off from Jeremiah's panic-stricken monologue to hear God's commentary on what is happening.

He says, For my people are foolish. They know me not. They are stupid children. They have no understanding. They are wise in doing evil. But how to do good, they know not.

People who should be wise in doing good and innocent in what is evil instead are wise in doing evil and ignorant about how to do good. And then verses 23 to 26, using these figurative descriptions, Jeremiah continues to describe the frightful judgment that God has in store for them.

[8 : 41] He says, I looked on the earth and behold, it was without form and void and to the heavens and they had no light. I looked on the mountains and behold, they were quaking and all the hills moved to and fro.

I looked and behold, there was no man and all the birds of the air had fled. I looked and behold, the fruitful land was a desert and all its cities were laid in ruins before the Lord, before his fierce anger. So the doom that Jeremiah is announcing is of kind of cataclysmic proportions. If you're familiar with the book of Genesis, which we went through not long ago, you probably know where the expression without form and void comes from, right?

Because in Genesis 1-2, in the initial stage of God's creation, when before the Lord, the before he brought everything into order by forming and filling the earth, the earth in that initial stage was described as formless and void, without form and void.

And that's the exact expression that Jeremiah uses here to describe the aftermath of the judgment that is coming. And so similarly, the heavens initially did not have any light, right? But then God says in Genesis 1-3, let there be light, and there was light.

[9 : 55] But Jeremiah says that after the judgment, there is no light. Likely, the mountains and hills that God brings forth, they're a symbol of stability and immovability. Yet these mountains and hills themselves are quaking.

They're moving to and fro. And similarly, the birds that God created in Genesis 1-20 will have all fled. There's no birds. And then Genesis 1-26, finally, God created man in his own image. Male and female, he created them. And then now there is no man in the land. So this is a systematic and systemic reversal of God's creation.

What Jeremiah is predicting here is that the judgment that is coming is so total that it will be a form of uncreation. It will decimate the universe that God created. That's the kind of judgment that is coming.

It will reduce Judah to this primordial chaos. And in the face of such a destructive army, everyone flees. And it says in verse 29, At the noise of horsemen and archers, every city takes to flight.

[10 : 54] They enter thickets. They climb among the rocks. And all the cities are forsaken. And no man dwells in them but God's people. Right? That's the sensible thing to do when something like that comes.

You flee. But look at what God's people do in verses 30-31. And you, oh desolate one, what do you mean that you dress in scarlet?

That you adorn yourself with ornaments of gold? That you enlarge your eyes with paint? In vain you beautify yourself.

Your lovers despise you. They seek your life. For I heard a cry as of a woman in labor, anguished as one giving birth to her first child.

The cry of the daughter of Zion gasping for breath, stretching out her hands, Woe is me, I am fainting before murderers. The daughter of Zion is referenced to Jerusalem.

[11 : 51] Daughter that is Zion is likely what it means. And unlike other cities and nations that fled before the Babylonian Empire's invasions, Jerusalem will open itself to invaders, like a prostitute who opens herself to any willing client.

Instead of fleeing, Jerusalem will seek to seduce Babylon and come to terms with them. But God warns them that it will not work. They are not seeking a truce.

They are not seeking tribute. They are seeking your destruction. And because, at least days before the invention of epidural, the greatest pain known to man is that of childbirth, especially first child.

So that's the image that is used. The kind of pain that will come upon you is that of a woman giving birth to her first child. So that's the warning. The warning of judgment.

And after this, in chapters 5 and 6, we see God's warrant for judgment. There will continue to be warnings of judgment here also, but in this section, God clearly explains why he is warranted to judge, why he is justified to judge these people and to Jerusalem in this way.

[13 : 03] To demonstrate this, God issues a challenge to anyone who would be willing to take it up in chapter 5, verse 1. It's a key verse. Read with me. Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem.

Look and take note. Search her squares to see if you can find a man, one who does justice and seeks truth, that I may pardon her.

The word truth doesn't merely mean truthful. Rather, it refers to someone who is true, someone who is faithful and loyal. And the word justice governs one's relationship to fellow men.

And the word truth governs one's relationship to God. So those two words together, when used together, refer to our covenant faithfulness to God, the relationship we have with him. We are to be just to our neighbors and true to our God.

That's what we are called to. And yet, as people search the streets, as Jeremiah looks and sees, there is not one such man in the streets of Jerusalem. If there were only one, he promised that I would pardon her.

[14:13] That's a reference to Jerusalem. If there was one righteous person, God would pardon the whole city. But there is not one person who can fit, who meet that requirement.

Jerusalem was brazen. Their faces are harder than rock, it says in verse 3. And Jeremiah was so confused and really bewildered by their stubbornness, he said this to himself in verses 4 to 5.

Well, these are only the poor. They have no sense. For they do not know the way of the Lord, the justice of their God. I will go to the great and will speak to them. For they know the way of the Lord and the justice of their God.

So the poor here is contrasted with the great, which usually refers to nobility or to people of prominence. So it's probably not referring to people just who are economically poor when he says poor, but it's referring to the social class of people, the people who are not of the nobility, the higher social class.

He's referring to the uneducated masses, basically, is what he's saying. And so Jeremiah is trying to give a charitable construction and trying to give an excuse for the people who are not following God and saying, oh, it's only the poor.

[15:26] They don't know better. They have no sense. They don't know the way of the Lord, the justice of their God. And so he says to himself, I'll go to the great because they should know better. They should know the way of the Lord. But Jeremiah finds that they all alike had broken the yoke.

They had burst the bonds. This image of breaking the yoke is of an ox, right, that is supposed to be under the yoke that its master has placed on it to labor and to do all the work that it's called upon to do.

But instead, it breaks apart the yoke and refuses to plow the ground and roams on its own. That's the kind of image. That's what Israel, that's what Judah is doing. And of course, an ox that bursts its bonds and roams on its own, then he thinks that it's free and he thinks it's safe.

But of course, that's exactly the moment when it becomes vulnerable. It's outside of the protection of its master and becomes vulnerable to the predators. And that's exactly what we find in verse 6. How apt is this as a description of human sin and sin in our own lives, right?

[16:40] We think that we are freeing ourselves from this heavy burden and yoke that God's placed on us. I don't want to labor for you, God. I don't want to do these things. I want to live for myself. I want to do these things in freedom.

Do what? Live it up. That's what I want. So you burst the bonds. You break the yoke. And you roam free and think that you are having the time of your life only to realize that that's the precise moment when you are vulnerable to the enemies who are prowling all around you.

It's God's hedge around. His protection is given for our good. His boundaries that He set for us to guide us in our lives are given for our good and Israel is breaking it. And so God asks His people in verses 7 to 9, How can I pardon you?

Your children have forsaken me and have sworn by those who are no gods. When I fed them to the full, they committed adultery and trooped to the houses of whores.

They were well-fed, lusty stallions, each neighing for his neighbor's wife. Shall I not punish them for these things, declares the Lord? And shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this?

[17:53] We see here both a figurative adultery of going after idols and a literal adultery of going after their neighbor's wives. In short, Judah was both untrue to God and unjust toward their neighbors.

They broke their covenant with God completely. And considering these realities, God asked, Shall I not punish for these things? Shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this?

This is God's warrant. Yes, God is warranted. He is justified. It is fair and right for Him to punish. The false prophets, however, are saying in verse 12, He will do nothing. No disaster will come upon us, nor shall we see sword or famine. We hear that a lot in our time as well. There's no judgment.

Love wins. Only love from God. There will be no judgment. He does not hold us to account. That's the voice of the false prophet.

[19 : 00] God says in verse 13, The prophets will become wind. The word is not in them. Thus shall it be done to them. This is a biting word play because the word wind is the same word that means spirit.

The prophets are supposed to speak by the Spirit of God, but instead of having the Spirit of God, these false prophets are just a bag of wind. verse 14, In contrast to these false prophets, God speaks to Jeremiah, Because you have spoken this word, behold, I am making my words in your mouth of fire.

And this people would, and the fire shall consume them. The truth that comes forth from Jeremiah's mouth will consume the people who refuse to repent.

because God's word comes with power. And in verse 15 to 17, God speaks to all Israel of their impending doom. The nation that is coming is so deadly that their quiver is like an open tomb. When their quiver is emptied of its arrows, tombs in Judah and Israel are filled with corpses. And so once again, and the warrant for judgment is Israel's own sin. Look with me at verse 19.

[20 : 13] And when your people say, Why has the Lord our God done all these things to us? You shall say to them, As you have forsaken me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve foreigners in a land that is not yours.

Poetic justice. Those who reject God to serve foreign gods will themselves end up serving foreigners. And the foolishness of Israel's sin is fully exposed in verses 20 to 25.

Read with me. Hear this, O foolish and senseless people, who have eyes but see not, who have ears but hear not. Do you not fear me? Declares the Lord. Do you not tremble before me?

I place the sand as the boundary for the sea, a perpetual barrier that it cannot pass. Though the waves toss, they cannot prevail. Though they roar, they cannot pass over it.

But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart. They have turned aside and gone away. They do not say in their hearts, Let us fear the Lord our God, who gives the rain in its season, the autumn rain and the spring rain and keeps for us the weeks appointed for the harvest.

[21 : 21] Your iniquities have turned these away and your sins have kept good from you. This is God basically taking his court to defend his case because in the ancient Near Eastern world, the sea symbolizes chaos and darkness.

They saw the world in this dualistic battle between good and evil and the forces of evil were symbolized by the sea. So all the ancient Near Eastern mythologies speak of the gods constantly striving and fighting against this sea monster, this god of chaos.

Yet, in the description of the sea in these verses, there is no struggle. There is no contest. The sea is just merely one of his creatures.

And God says, I set the boundary. That's it. He cannot come over it. And contrary to the idolatry of Israel and Judah who went after Baal, the so-called god of rain, it is the Lord God who brings rain upon his people.

And God says, and when this is all true, you have not feared me. Instead, you have feared these idols. When God, who is Lord over all, who is enthroned above all things, when he should be feared above all these so-called gods, instead, you have turned away from him.

[22 : 43] How foolish and senseless. And so God says once again, in verses 26 to 30, shall I not punish them for these things?

Shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this? And look at the description. So in chapters 2 and 3, which we went over last week, right, most of the sins that Jeremiah described had to do with people's idolatry, their sins against God, the way they were untrue to God.

But here in this chapter and chapter 6 as well, the focus is really on the sins toward our neighbors, sins toward other people, and how that affects God also.

So it's how we were unjust toward our neighbors. And that's what's highlighted here in verses 26 to 30. Read with me. For wicked men are found among my people. They lurk like fowlers lying in wait.

They set a trap. They catch men like a cage full of birds. Their houses are full of deceit. Therefore, they have become great and rich. They have grown fat and sleek. They know no bounds in deeds of evil.

[23 : 50] They judge not with justice the cause of the fatherless to make it prosper. And they do not defend the rights of the needy. Shall I not punish them for these things?

Shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this? When they should have been advocating for those who have no voice in society.

When they should have defended those who are weak and powerless in society. These people instead have taken advantage of the fatherless and the needy.

Because they have been unjust toward their neighbors. God pronounces judgment over them. Then now moving on to chapter 6.

God continues to find more things to warn them about. More warnings of judgment. But he also continues to describe his warrant. Because in verses 6 to 7 he says why they deserve this destruction.

[24 : 55] This is the city that must be punished. There is nothing but oppression within her. As a well keeps its water fresh so keeps fresh. She keeps fresh her evil. Violence and destruction are heard within her.

Sickness and wounds are ever before me. And one of the things that specific ways in which they have done this is verse 9. They shall glean... Actually that's... Sorry that's the wrong part. And because of this judgment is coming and the invaders will leave no stone unturned.

And it says in verse 9 they shall... These are the invaders glean thoroughly as a vine the remnant of Israel. And then God commands these invaders and the rest of the verse like a grape gatherer pass your hand again over its branches.

So you need to kind of know the agricultural I guess practices of this time to understand this because gleaning metaphor kind of is signaling the comprehensiveness of this judgment because according to Mosaic law Israelites were permitted to harvest their fields and harvest their vineyards but they were not allowed to glean.

So gleaning is what you do after the harvest. You go back and pick the ones that are still left and you pick up the fruits that have been dropped. You're basically finishing the harvest. That's what gleaning is. And in Leviticus 19.10 this is what God says.

[26 : 11] You shall not strip your vineyard bare neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner. I am the Lord your God.

So there's poetic justice here also. God cares for the poor. He cares for the sojourners those who are foreign who have no say in their society. And yet and so they abuse the poor.

They were unjust toward the poor and toward the fatherless. And what God says in turn will happen is that your invaders will come and they will glean you. Already in 722 BC the Assyrian Empire had gone through the northern kingdom of Israel made them all exiles and now the Babylonian kingdom comes again to clean up what is left to glean the rest of them.

There will be no fruit remaining. That's the comprehensiveness of the judgment that is coming.

Because verse 13, 14 says from the least to the greatest everyone is greedy for unjust gain.

And these false prophets it says in verse 14 they have healed the wound of my people lightly saying peace, peace when there is no peace. They have treated a heart defect like a heart burn.

[27 : 35] Giving people antacids when they really need an open heart surgery. They have treated skin cancer like a cut putting a band-aid over it when what they need is a surgery.

Don't believe the false the voice of the false prophets that say you don't need a radical transformation in your life. You're a pretty good person. All you need to do is change and modify little things here and there turn a new page and you can be good before God.

That is a lie. You need an open heart surgery. You need a total transformation. You need to become a new creation in Christ and that's the message here that you must repent.

There is no peace without Christ. There is no peace without returning to God completely and wholeheartedly with all that you are. Yet God's people have abandoned His ways and lost look at verses 16 to 21.

And stand by the roads and look and ask for the ancient paths where the good way is and walk in it and find rest for your souls. But they said we will not walk in it.

[28 : 52] I said watchmen over you saying pay attention to the sound of the trumpet. But they said we will not pay attention. Therefore hear O nations and know O congregation what will happen to them.

Hear O earth behold I am bringing disaster upon this people the fruit of their devices because they have not paid attention to my words and as for my law they have rejected it. What used to me is frankincense that comes from Sheba or sweet cane from a distant land.

Your burnt offerings are not acceptable nor your sacrifice is pleasing to me. Therefore thus says the Lord behold I will lay before this people stumbling blocks against which they shall stumble.

Fathers and sons together neighbor and friend shall perish. Some people in our culture value rugged individualism and they romanticize about taking the road less traveled by.

Let's forge a new path and find a new frontier as we say. Fascinated with the rapid events of technology we are always looking for the next big thing. But when it comes to our faith and life in Jesus Christ when it comes to our walk with God it says the ancient past that's where the good way is.

[30 : 11] Our world has changed yes but God has not changed. The way our spiritual problems manifest themselves have changed yes our vices have changed but the root of all of those sins our rebellion against God has not changed.

Our underlying spiritual problem is still the same and therefore the solution is still the same one suggested all throughout scripture. Our problems are not novel and we can find God's wisdom for navigating our ever-changing world in God's unchanging word.

God's people have rejected the ancient paths they've ignored the watchmen like Jeremiah and so God calls upon the nations of the earth as witnesses and announces his judgment over his congregation and these people are not you know completely abandoning God they're still paying lip service to him because we see that they're bringing offering right?

they're bringing frankincense from Sheba that's a highly coveted commodity exotic they bring sweet cane from a distant land yet God says their offerings are not acceptable it's not pleasing as 1 Samuel 15 22 says has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord behold to obey is better than sacrifice and to listen than the fat of rams it's easy to to recognize to wear a badge of respectability as Christians with certain behavioral markers that we fulfill like going to church praying before meals not swearing out loud in front of people coming to Sunday services and raising our hands in worship if we do all of those things yet when we are in the privacy of our homes when we are in a different compartmentalized part of our life with friends who don't know our life as a

Christian we live in disobedience if we disobey what good is our sacrifice what good is it to have that fish sticker on your car or wear a cross on your neck if you are not completely submitted to the Lord and living in light of what he has revealed in his word at the close of this chapter God reiterates his commission to Jeremiah once again verses 27 to 30 I have made you a tester of metals among my people that you may know and test their ways they are all stubbornly rebellious going about with slanders they are bronze and iron all of them act corruptly the bellows blow fiercely the lead is consumed by the fire in vain the refining goes on for the wicked are not removed rejected silver they are called for the

[33 : 27] Lord has rejected them Jeremiah is to test God's people like a metallurgist who tests metal when they test metal they put it in the fire to refine it to burn away all the impurities but if the metal has too much impurities they discard the affected metal altogether because it's useless and such was the case with God's people they are all stubbornly rebellious going about with slanders they are bronze and iron all of them act corruptly right so what Jeremiah is looking for in the refining process is silver silver for it to come and yet instead all he finds is bronze and iron and what an apt image because those are two of the hardest metals known to the people in the ancient world stubborn rebellious bronze iron no silver to show for it so God has rejected them all you have been very patient following along through a whole series of God's judgments and you are it's fair for you to ask the question why does God's rejection of his people from 2600 years ago matter to me now we're so far removed from it now we haven't sinned like they have but is that really true as we have seen from today's assurance of pardon

God's assurance God's assessment of us today is no different from God's assessment of his people in this passage Romans 3 23 said all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God all of us without exception have been stubbornly rebellious like Israel and Judah remember what I said in the

introduction we are very bad judges of our own morality far worse than even what that research suggests sin like a drug desensitizes us to evil so that we must reach an ever higher threshold of evil in order to get sin always begets more sin and not only that sin functions as its own defense lawyer affecting our consciences and coloring our perceptions in order to justify its existence in our lives so we have to turn to God for an accurate diagnosis of our condition and this is God's assessment that we are all stubbornly rebellious think about it this way in the New York Times bestseller good boss bad boss the Stanford professor of management science Robert Sutton explores how good and bad bosses affect their employees and in his book he cites a study or survey from Florida University which documents the stark contrast in performance between employees who have endured abuse from their bosses and employees who have not 30% of those who reported abuse from their bosses slowed down or made intentional mistakes compared to only 6% of those who never endured abuse 33% confessed to not putting in maximum effort compared with 9% of those not abused 29% took sick time off when not ill compared to 4% of those not abused 25% took more or longer breaks compared with 7% of those not abused I mean these studies are really funny to me because it's kind of common sense right you would expect this of people but it kind of proves the point and that's not surprising and if we see the statistics and we look at these employees who are slacking off our tendency is to cut them some slack right because hey they have a terrible work environment and they're enduring abuses from their bosses all the time but what if they didn't have abusive bosses they had generous bosses that lavished them with bonuses and unlimited personal days they had good bosses who were committed to them awarded them for their good work and gave them constructive feedback and sent them to professional development opportunities so that they can grow and progress in their careers what if they had gracious bosses who did not berate them in front of others when they make mistakes instead they take responsibility for your mistakes so that you can be spared the punishment and penalty what if they had those kinds of bosses and they still slacked off and eventually left their bosses complaining and grumbling all the way out the door we would be right to judge them as selfish ingrates who should have been fired long before they quit that's what we all have done

God created a paradise for us to dwell in with the world of joys and pleasures to lawfully enjoy yet by abusing this created order and transgressing the boundaries that God set for us we accuse God of being stingy and ungenerous toward us God has been a benevolent ruler over us leading us with wisdom and selfless love yet we begrudge his authority and seek to rule ourselves we refuse to acknowledge him in our lives and live for our own selfish aims we are the selfish ingrates who deserve to be fired we are the adulteress who has cheated on God with many lovers we are the rebellious children who has brought unspeakable shame upon the name of our father so in the same way that God's warned of his judgment and was warranted his judgment like here in Jeremiah [39 : 32] God issues that same warning to all of us today I want you to get that God's not this sucker of a boyfriend or a girlfriend that lets you do whatever you want and takes all kinds of abuses and still whenever you want comes back to you because they're that desperate God God is the king he is holy and we treat him we mistreat him the punishment that God's people experienced was to be exiled cut off from the land the land this is not just a temporal punishment because the promised land represents the very presence of God that's where God met with them and dwelled with them and to be cut off from that means to be cut off from the very presence of God and the threat that we are under the punishment that we deserve is exactly the same Luke 12 4-5

God says this Jesus says I tell you my friends do not fear those who kill the body and after that have nothing more that they can do but I will warn you whom to fear fear him who after he has killed has authority to cast into hell yes I tell you fear him and hell the essence of hell is to be cut off from the presence of God it's the same as the punishment that fell God's people in the Old Testament to illustrate God's described as a consuming fire throughout scripture and he's also the one who dwells in unapproachable light says in 1st Timothy 6 16 1st John 1 5 says God is light and in him is no darkness at all so in contrast contrast those images of God to the images of hell Jesus describes hell simultaneously in Matthew 25 30 and 25 41 as the outer darkness and eternal fire right obviously those two things cannot be literally true both of because either you're going to have hot fire or you're going to have darkness you can't have both because if there's fire there's light it's not dark so these two are not intended to be literal explanations rather they describe really hell in metaphorical ways so

I think the punishment will be far worse than burning in fire forever because being separated from the presence of God is far more severe than that I'm not trying to downplay hell hell is going to be worse than you can imagine but the Christian philosopher Henry Staub explains it this way he says hell in the Bible is very hot or very cold depending on whether the sinner is perceived as a rebel or an alien hell is made by those who climb the holy mountain and try to unseat the holy one who ablaze with glory dwells in delight unapproachable those who mount an attack on God and cross the barrier of this exclusive divinity die like moths in the flame of him who will not and cannot be displaced and hell is made by those who turning their backs on God flee the light and move toward the eternal blackness that marks God's absence hell then is unarrested sin's natural and programmatic end sin is either rebellion or flight and when persisted in leads either to the fiery furnace or to the cold and desolate night hell therefore is the fitting punishment for those who have stubbornly rejected

God so what then are we hell bound sinners to do there remains a glimmer of hope in Jeremiah back in chapter 4 verse 27 to 28 the Lord said the whole land shall be a desolation yet I will not make a full end for this the earth shall mourn and the heavens above be dark for I have spoken I have purposed I have not relented nor I will turn back the whole of the land will be destroyed yet it will not be fully destroyed God has purposed he will not relent in his judgment and wrath yet his wrath will not be released in its fullness and this is the promise that God would withhold his judgment that brings me to my final point God says this again and again chapter 5 10 he says go up through her vine rows and destroy but make not a full end again in chapter 5 verse 18 but even in those days declares the

Lord I will not make a full end of you this restrain in God's judgment of his people is later contrasted with the description of the pagan nations of whom God says in Jeremiah 30 11 he will make a full end so why does God restrain his judgment over his people in this manner God said earlier in chapter 5 verse 1 run to and throw through the streets see if there's one man that does justice and seeks truth and he promised that if we find one man that he would spare the whole city the whole nation of Israel and the reason why God withholds his judgment is because he knows that from those who are spared among his people from the remnant of Israel there will rise up a man who can stand as that one man who does do justice whom God can look upon and say on account of him I will pardon the entire city on account of him

[45 : 23] I will pardon the whole nation if you feel the weight of the judgment that you are under you will feel the hope that this brings that God looks upon us and says there's no way that man enters my presence there's no way that woman will ever experience the eternal life I have in store I created for them yet Jesus came all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith this was to show

God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins how can God pass over the sins of his people not destroy them in full because he's looking to Christ who will come and who will bear the full wrath of God in himself on the cross and you receive that salvation by receiving Jesus by faith whether you are not a believer yet or whether you're already a follower of Christ this is my closing exhortation to you don't forget your plight that you're under judgment that your case is hopeless apart from Christ and don't for a moment for those of you already have put your faith in Christ think that you can now stand on your own persevere in your own strength no you'll keep falling on your face let

Christ stand for you let Christ be strong for you let Christ speak for you and you will find that he is a mighty mighty savior let's close our eyes and reflect on that truth for a moment and we'll respond by praying together as a church together next and ■ Meine Thank you.