

## **Is There Any Word From The Lord?**

I am confident that at least once or twice over the past 43 years I have preached from this passage of Scripture found in Jeremiah 37. The last time I could find in my records was ten years ago. The phrase, a question from one of Judah's kings to the prophet Jeremiah, has often echoed in my heart and mind. As I prayed this week, not just about the sermon but about a host of challenges, I found myself asking once again, **Is There Any Word From the Lord?** Turn to Jeremiah 37 and allow me to set the stage for the king's question.

The once united people we called Israel has been divided into two nations. The northern Kingdom is called Israel, the southern kingdom called Judah. The northern kingdom has been destroyed by the Assyrians about 100 years before Jeremiah and now God is bringing judgment against the southern kingdom of Judah because of their sin. They too have forsaken the Lord and worshiped idols. They sinned against God and refused to obey his word or listen to his prophet. The Assyrians that conquered Israel have themselves been conquered by the Babylonians. Now king Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians are controlling the region and threatening to lay siege to Jerusalem the capital. (Babylon is already calling the shots: see 37:1).

God called his prophet Jeremiah to prophecy and warn the people and the king that final judgment was coming upon Judah. He told them the only way to escape death was to surrender to the Babylonians. This was God's doing, God's judgment and there was no way around it. Some of the Jews as you can imagine, branded Jeremiah a traitor for recommending surrender to their enemy. There is a bit of a reprieve when the Egyptians come to the aid of Judah because of a treaty signed years before. The people of Jerusalem rejoice thinking they have escaped the destruction that Jeremiah spoke of, but read what the Lord told Jeremiah to announce to Judah's king. **“Pharaoh's army, which has marched out to support you, will go back to its own land, to Egypt. Then the Babylonians will return and attack this city; they will capture it and burn it down...Do not deceive yourselves, thinking ‘The Babylonians will surely leave us.’ They will not! Even if you were to defeat the entire Babylonian army that is attacking you and only wounded men were left in their tents, they would come out and burn this city down.”** Jeremiah 37:7-10 Judgment was coming and they couldn't stop it.

When the Babylonian army withdrew (briefly) and Jeremiah started to leave the city to check on his home, the captain of the guard stopped him, accused him of deserting to the Babylonians, had him beaten and thrown into a cell in a dungeon. The king was young and afraid to go against his advisors so he went along with keeping Jeremiah in prison, but then

privately sent for Jeremiah and asked the question, **“Is there any word from the Lord?”**

### **Jeremiah 37:17**

It is a strange question to ask in light of the what the bible says earlier concerning the king. **“Neither he nor his attendants nor the people of the land paid any attention to the words the Lord had spoken through Jeremiah the prophet.”** Jeremiah 37:2 They ignored the word of the Lord, yet in the very next verse the bible says the king sent word to Jeremiah and asked him to pray to the Lord our God for us! Interesting isn't it? They refused to listen to the prophet's words, but when things got bad, they wanted him to pray for them. Sounds like a lot of people today, doesn't it? “I won't obey God or live for him, but when trouble comes I want grandma to pray for me!” Let me make a few observations.

**Inquiring of the Lord is the right thing but what do you plan to do when He answers?** It's right to ask God for direction, for guidance and wisdom and help, but are you prepared to follow his direction, regardless? This was the problem with the king. He wanted a word from God, he wanted direction, he just didn't want to follow God's direction when he heard the Lord's word. His failure to do so would cost him dearly.

“Is there any word from the Lord Jeremiah?” That wasn't really the question he was asking. He was really asking “Have you changed your mind about what you've been saying will happen after cooling your heels in a dungeon for a few months? What does the Lord have to say now?” He wanted a new word. Here's the next thing you need to know.

**You can't afford to make God's word say what you want it to say.** We don't have permission to rewrite Scripture, to make it fit our circumstances or culture or to make it easier on our sins. The king was trying to find a word from God that would make him happy. He wanted the promise and prosperity version of the bible, where it's all just happy promises and nothing else. That's not the bible. There was a word for the king and the nation and he needed to hear it and heed it. Sometimes we need to ask God for the courage to hear the word he has for us. We need to hear it, repent, obey it, make a course correction based on his word to us! Act on it!

Look at Jeremiah 36. This was Jehoiakim, a prior king, listening as Jeremiah's prophecy is read aloud. After three or four columns are read they cut off that part of the scroll and throw it into the fire, then read three or four more columns and then burn them. The bible says **“The king and all his attendants who heard all these words showed no fear, nor did they tear their clothes.”** Jeremiah 36:24 They decided they could pick and choose what they wanted to believe, what they wanted to hear and obey. They showed no fear of God, no remorse, they

didn't tear their garments and repent. Instead the king blamed Jeremiah and sent word to arrest him for speaking God's word. Friends, we live in a world where the same thing is happening even in the church. We are witnessing evangelical churches essentially cutting out pages of Scripture they don't agree with anymore without fear, regret or remorse. God help us.

I believe there is a word from the Lord for today and we need to hear it and heed it as well! It's not enough to ask if there is a word from the Lord, we have to be prepared to hear it and obey it. Correct your course! God told the king to surrender and he would live. Instead, the king refused to obey, tried to escape and ended up being captured. He was forced to watch as his family was killed before his eyes and then he was blinded and spent the rest of his life in Babylonian imprisonment, blind and alone, regretting the fact he didn't listen to the prophet and obey the word of the Lord. If you want to hear from God, you better be prepared to respond and obey the word he speaks! The bible tells us to be more than hearers of God's word, we are to be doers. There are consequences to hearing and disobeying and there are blessings that come with obedience! Is there a word from the Lord? Yes. It may be a do right word rather than a feel good word. Are you willing to listen and obey? It may not be the word you expected or even the word you wanted, but are you ready to listen and obey? Are you willing to accept his word and his timing? Before you answer, let me remind you of this.

**God's word is a redemptive word.** While Jeremiah warned of coming judgement, God still had a word of prosperity and peace for Judah. It was 70 years in the future but God had not forgotten them. Even though the people were suffering the consequences of their choices and sins, God would not forsake them. There was still a redemptive work at hand. God had already promised redemption and restoration. He was judging sin so ultimately he could save the nation and save us. He would turn the people back to obedience, back to serving God because through those people the Messiah would be born. Our salvation depended on the survival of the Jewish people. Thank God his word is still redemptive!

You may be going through a difficult time or season right now. Facing a challenge and wondering what will be the outcome of it all. Bear in mind God is always acting in redemptive ways. That's true for you and your situation. In spite of the judgment, God says, **"When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future...I will...bring you back from captivity."** Jeremiah 29:10-11. In Jeremiah 33 God says, **"Nevertheless, I will bring health**

**and healing... I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security. I will bring Judah and Israel back from captivity and will rebuild them as they were before. I will cleanse them from all the sin they have committed against me and will forgive all their sins of rebellion against me.” Jeremiah 33:6-7**

If you are going through a challenge, a trial right now, unsure of how you're going to make it through, obey the Lord, stay surrendered to him and realize he is working in redemptive ways in our lives and circumstances. He is taking us towards healing and hope. If you are living in the trials of Jeremiah 37-39, don't forget the redemptive and faithful promises of Jeremiah 29-33. He will heal and restore. He will forgive and cleanse. He will lead you into blessing and peace. The sounds of praise and rejoicing and laughter will be heard again for the Lord is good and his mercy endures forever. Don't forget it, in spite of the trial you're in. Obey him and he will bring you through!

It may feel as though life is out of control, the devil seems to be inflicting damage in your life or in your family and you've been asking, like the king, Is there any word from the Lord? Does God have a word for me? Is he still in control because the devil seems to be winning. Listen to what I've come to tell you: the devil may be wreaking havoc in your life, trying everything to destroy you and your faith, but if you will hold onto the Lord and keep obeying his word, the outcome will be different than you expect! The devil doesn't have control over the life of a believer. The bible says in Mark 16:17 that those who believe in Jesus will cast out devils. That sounds like God has given authority to his children and we are in control, not the devil. We are in a battle, yes, and the devil is like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour, but “greater is the one who is in you (the Spirit of God) than the one who is in the world.” I John 4:4

There is a word from the Lord for you today. You don't have to be worried about all that is going on in the world. Be concerned, yes. Be involved and take an active part to see that righteousness prevails, absolutely, but understand that God is still in control. Don't let your heart be troubled. Ultimately God rules and reigns in this world. Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon's king thought he was calling the shots, but God spoke to him in a dream that “...**the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.**” **Daniel 4:17** Don't get confused. God is still in control in this world. He is Sovereign and he is Lord over all. The Psalmist declared, “**The Lord foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.**” **Psalm 33:10-11** Are you ready

and willing to trust the sovereign purposes of an all powerful, all knowing God? He has plans for nations and he has plans for you. If you will trust him and obey, he will work those plans for your good and for his glory. His plans for you stand firm and solid forever, through the generations.

Is there a word from the Lord for you today? Yes there is. It may be a word that calls you to repentance, to trust, to confess and believe, to renewed faith, to surrender, to look to him, submit to him and his timing and his way for your life. Is there a word from the Lord for you today? Yes, come to him. He won't cast you out. He hasn't forgotten you. He will forgive you, cleanse you, save you, change you. Obey him. Make the course correction he is telling you to make in your life.

Is there a word from the Lord for you? Yes there is. He wants you to know he is the same yesterday, today and forever. You have no reason to fear, not today, not tomorrow. He won't leave you or forsake you. He is still a healer, a comforter, a provider. He is still working miracles and he is still doing the impossible. He is still causing all things to work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose. He will yet see to it that good purposes will be fulfilled in and through your life. Don't doubt him. Trust him!

Is there a word from the Lord for you today? Yes, there is. He is still the Lord, the God of all flesh and nothing is too difficult for him. He is still setting his purposes in the hearts of his people and still calling us by faith to launch out and fulfill that purpose. He is still calling us to live out the dream he has planted in our hearts, to dare to believe that what he has said about us and to us and for us will come to pass. You thought all your dreams had been destroyed just like Jerusalem was destroyed. But God is a rebuilder of broken dreams and broken walls. He will call those dreams to life once again. God's purposes and promises stand firm forever.

Is there a word from the Lord for you? Yes, there is. He wants you to know even though you're walking through evil days and shadow lands, his light will still shine on you and through you. His word will illuminate your path. His life giving presence will be with you to sustain and strengthen you. His Holy Spirit will be there every moment to comfort and guide. His presence will cause the darkness to become light!

Is there a word from the Lord for you? Yes there is. He says don't be weary in well doing for in due season you will reap if you don't faint. Don't give up because a crown of life and a crown of victory has been promised to everyone who overcomes. That means there will be

obstacles to climb over, giants to contend with, challenges to overcome, but don't lose sight of the goal line and don't lose sight of Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

Is there a word from the Lord for you today? Yes, there is. You may be suffering right now, going through some things you never thought you would have to face or endure, but hear his word to you: **“And the God of grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.” 1 Peter 5:10-11**

Remember God's word from Jeremiah to Judah in Jeremiah 33. “You'll go through this, but I will restore you and bring health and healing and prosperity and peace to you.” That's what God did for Judah and for Israel and that's what he will do for you. God's at work and he will restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

Is there a word from the Lord for you today? Yes there is. Weeping may endure for a night but joy comes in the morning. You've got a reason to rejoice because in the world we will have tribulation but in Christ, we have overcome the world. In Christ we can be exceedingly glad. Through Christ we can do all things! We are more than conquerors and nothing can separate us from his love.

Yes, there is a word from the Lord for you today. Are you willing to ask, to listen and then obey that word? Perhaps the Lord is reminding you of a promise, not one he made to you, but rather one you made to him. A vow you made and now he is calling you to make good on your promise, your word to him. Obey him. Surrender to him. Perhaps the word from the Lord is to step out in faith in a new endeavor for the Lord. A new call to ministry. I believe he has a word for you. Dare to ask him. Prepare your heart for the answer and then **Listen, trust and obey!**