

Dear Pathway Family,

It's hard to believe that it is already August. Where has this year gone? We started 2023 with burst pipes and significant water and mold damage, but by God's grace and mercy, we have managed to continue to send out His Word without interruption. These past eight months have been an emotional and financial struggle— but a spiritual gift. Now more than ever, I know the truth of what my God has promised! ***And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong*** (II Cor. 12:9-10). We will continue walking through each day, knowing God has great things in store for Bible Pathway.

I don't know how people make it day-to-day without knowing and trusting that God is in control. As it stands right now, our insurance company is denying much of our claim. The mitigation work is complete, but we have no start date for the restoration work. Our front offices are all stripped to their bare bones, But guess what...GOD IS STILL ON THE THRONE!!!! We can take all our strength from these six words. ***But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible*** (Matt. 19:26).

I feel like I have shared more Scriptures in my letters than usual this year, but God is speaking them to my heart to share with you. All of us face different challenges, but the guidance provided by God's Word applies to every pathway and storm. Please continue praying for Bible Pathway Ministries as we pray for you all daily. God will provide all our needs. ***For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly*** (Ps. 84:11).

In His Love,

Jennifer

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD (Is. 2:2-5).

What a beautiful vision of the future! Isaiah had been tasked with exposing the Israelites' sins and warning them of the horrific consequences that lay just around the corner. Still, God ensured that Isaiah understood the effects would not be permanent no matter how dire the fast-approaching circumstances became. ***In the last days***, the will of God would prevail over the imperfect will of mankind. ***And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.***

This knowledge was of vital importance, not just to Isaiah, but also to the scattered minority of Israelites who had retained a deep and abiding love of God (Is. 6:13). This faithful few lived their lives as best they could in accordance with God's Word. They were likely deeply troubled by the state of their nation. ***Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward*** (1:4). These individuals heard and understood Isaiah's warnings, but they realized that the words had fallen on deaf ears for the vast majority of their countrymen. God's judgment WAS coming,

and they felt powerless to prevent it. To that end, Isaiah's words offered them much-needed comfort and assurance. God would prevail regardless of how it might appear in the moment. As long as they remained steadfast in their faith, their future with Him was assured.

For the faithful Christian of today, the world is frequently a disturbing place. Societal norms have shifted far away from Godly values, and those who cling to them are often shunned as intolerant, narrow-minded bigots. No matter how hard we try, nothing we do seems to make a difference in the overall social/political/religious climate of the world in which we live. Just as did the handful of ancient Israelites, we understand that God's judgment is coming, but we can't seem to make anyone else understand that. Yet just as it did for those beleaguered Israelites, God's Word reassures us that our place with Him is secure, no matter the state of the world around us. The actions of men cannot derail his plan, and He has promised that all will know the truth in His time.

For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God (Rom. 14:11-12).

Thought for the Day: *To trust God is to know that all will turn out right in the end. It is a feeling of security that we can find nowhere else in life.*

Christ Revealed: As the One who will judge the nations (Is. 2:2-4). **The Lord Jesus Christ . . . shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing** (II Tim. 4:1).

Word Studies: 1:13 **vain oblations** = worthless sacrifices offered by hypocrites; 2:12 **day of the Lord** = the coming judgment upon the unfaithful as well as the time of rejoicing for the faithful; 3:18 **cauls, and their round tires like the moon** = headbands bejeweled with sun and moon ornaments; 3:22 **crisping pins** = money bags or purses; 3:24 **stomacher** = rich robe; 4:4 **blood of Jerusalem** = Jerusalem was guilty of killing innocent prophets.

Pray for Staff: Kevin Jennings • **Government Official:** Gov. Doug Burgum(ND), Rep. Josh Harder(CA) • **Country:** United Arab Emirates (5,628,805) Eastern Arabia Peninsula • Major Languages: Arabic, Persian, English, Hindi, Urdu • Pressure and hostility against Christians are increasing • 96% Muslim; 4% Other (Includes Christian, Hindu, Jew) • **Prayer Suggestion:** Ask the Lord to reveal His perfect will for you (Ps. 25:4).

Optional Reading: Hebrews 9

Moreover the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD (Is. 7:10-12).

Ahaz, king of Judah, was in desperate straits. For the first time since the city was claimed as God's own, Jerusalem was under siege (II Kings 16:5). The combined forces of Israel and Syria were bearing down upon him in retaliation for not joining with them in their war against Assyria. Ahaz was concerned that his people's limited resources would not be enough to sustain them. During this dark time, the Lord sent Isaiah to inform the king that Jerusalem would survive the siege and the nation of Judah would remain sovereign. To further assure him of the truth of His words, **the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God.**

From our readings, we know that Ahaz was not a God-fearing man. **But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel** (II Kings 16:3). Even knowing this, the Lord reached out to him as the king of Judah and the occupier of the throne of David, offering him assurances that those attacking him would fail; He even offered to provide proof of His Word. Instead of being humbled by God's message, Ahaz reacted to Isaiah's words with thinly disguised scorn. **Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD.** Although his reply was superficially pious, he was not expressing his confidence in God's Word. He firmly believed that the only way out of his current situation was by seeking the aid of Assyria. **So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, I am thy servant and thy son: come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me** (II Kings 16:7). So confident was he of his plan, that he offered up the treasures of God's Temple in exchange for the protection of Assyria.

We can't serve the Lord our God if we do not trust Him, and it is impossible to trust Him if we do not first know Him.

Ahaz was a shrewd politician. He studied the military might of the nations around him, and it was from this knowledge that he made his decisions. He trusted only what he knew, and he did not know God because he refused to learn of Him. This is the same mistake that is being made today the world over. God's Word offers us all the information we need so that we might know Him, but we must first make the conscious choice to learn from its pages. Only through prayerful study of His most precious Word will our eyes be opened to the truth and our hearts be freed to trust and to serve.

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name (John 20:31).

Thought for the Day: *If belief in yourself comes at the exclusion of God, then all you are left with is faith in a fool.*

Christ Revealed: Isaiah reveals that a Child shall be born; a Son shall be given; and ***that the government shall be upon His shoulder*** (Is. 9:6). ***The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever*** (Rev. 11:15).

Word Studies: 5:1 **vineyard** = the Israelites; 5:5 **go to** = listen to Me; 5:23 **reward** = bribes; 7:16 **abhorrest** = hate, despise; 8:21 **hardly bestead** = sorely distressed, hard pressed; 9:9 **stoutness** = arrogance.

Pray for Staff: Ryan McCrary • **Government Official:** Sen Jacky Rosen (NV), Sen. J.D. Vance (OH), Rep.Burgess Owens(UT) • **Country:** United Kingdom (63,742,977) Western Europe • Major Language: English • Religious Freedom • 59.6% Christian; 4.4% Muslim; 1.3% Hindu; 2% Other; 25.7% None; 7.2% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray for understanding of His will as you read the Word of God (Ps. 25:5).

Optional Reading: Hebrews 10

And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon His name, declare His doings among the people, make mention that His name is exalted. Sing unto the LORD; for He hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee (Is. 12:1-6).

Chapter 12 of the Book of Isaiah is a song of prayer and praise; its content is reminiscent of the Book of Psalms. However, we need to take careful note of what is being referenced here. Isaiah is not praising God for actions that He has already taken; he is praising Him for the future restoration of His people, and he is composing the song that will be sung by all those who will share in God's salvation when that time arrives. ***Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation.***

Outside of the air that we breathe, there is nothing on this earth that is more essential to the human body than water. While a typical adult can survive for three or more weeks without food, they will die in less than a week without water. The recuperative powers of water are extraordinary. If you were to give water to a person dying of dehydration, they would begin to revive within minutes of the precious liquid touching their lips. It is only fitting then that Isaiah states: ***Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.*** The ***water*** to which he refers is the living water, which can only be obtained through Jesus Christ our Lord (John 7:37-39).

As the gospel has been spread across the earth, many wells have sprung up from which have poured the water of life, but in every instance, the source of that water is the same.

But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life (John 4:14). Jesus IS the fountain from which the living water spills. Every believer must receive the priceless, satisfying, life-sustaining water from Him and Him alone.

In celebration of this, Isaiah's words ring out in eternal praise. ***Praise the LORD, call upon His name, declare His doings among the people, make mention that His name is exalted.*** A gift such as the one we have received is too magnificent not to be shared! ***And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*** (Mark 16:15). The Word of God is clear; it is our greatest privilege and most solemn responsibility to share this life-saving water with all who are spiritually dying.

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17).

Thought for the Day: *Spiritual thirst might me easier to overlook than physical thirst, but the consequences of ignoring it are much greater.*

Christ Revealed: As the Descendant of Jesse, King David's father (Is. 11:1; compare Luke 3:23,31-32). Isaiah 11 reveals Christ's coming earthly rule of righteousness.

Word Studies: 10:1 **grievousness** = oppression, injustice; 10:12 **high** = proud; 10:20 **stay** = rely; 10:22 **consumption** = destruction; 10:33 **lop** = cut off; 14:16 **narrowly look upon** = gaze at.

Pray for Staff: Judy McCrary • **Government Official:** Sen Chris Murphy (CT), Rep. Gabe Vasquez (NM) • **Country:** United States of America (318,892,103) North America • Major Languages: English, Spanish • Religious Freedom • 51.3% Protestant; 23.9% Roman Catholic; 1.7% Mormon; 1.6% Other Christian; 1.7% Jewish; 0.7% Buddhist; 0.6% Muslim; 2.5% Other/Unspecified; 12% Unaffiliated; 4% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Ask the Lord to be merciful and to forgive your sins (Ps. 25:6-7).

Optional Reading: Hebrews 11

***S**urely the princes of Zoan are fools, the counsel of the **W**ise counsellors of Pharaoh is become brutish: how say ye unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings? Where are they? where are thy wise men? and let them tell thee now, and let them know what the **L**ORD of hosts hath purposed upon Egypt. The princes of Zoan are become fools, the princes of Noph are deceived; they have also seduced Egypt, even they that are the stay of the tribes thereof. The **L**ORD hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof: and they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof, as a drunken man staggereth in his vomit (Is. 19:11-14).*

Egypt had long stood as a mighty presence in the ancient world. The Pharaohs of Egypt purported themselves to be sons of the sun god Ra and demanded worshipful allegiance from their subjects. They surrounded themselves with **wise counsellors** and lived without fear of their neighbors, secure within the boundaries of their land.

So secure was Egypt that Isaiah's words concerning her downfall were no doubt met with scorn and disbelief. Scripture tells us that God's people had come to depend on the solid strength of their neighbor. King Hoshea of Israel had sought the aid of Egypt (II Kings 17:1-4) when he tried to free himself from Assyrian control, and envoys had been sent to the Egyptian Pharaoh from the beleaguered nation of Judah while under the reign of King Hezekiah, requesting aid in their fight against the Assyrians (18:20-21). God, however, knew that the Egyptians had built their empire on nothing more than lies and false beliefs. Their faith was in an idol conceived of by man. Their wisdom was based on this belief, so it was doomed to fail. ***And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it*** (Matt 7:26-27).

The Lord promised to lay bare the lies of Egypt. ***The LORD hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof: and***

they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof. He took into account their great pride and chose to work through it, crumbling it from the inside out. He made the words of their ***wise counsellors brutish***, and He proclaimed: ***And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbour; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom*** (Is. 19:2).

God's warning is as pertinent to us now as it was to His people then: ***The LORD hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof.*** Regardless of what the godless wish to believe, the Lord IS involved in their day-to-day lives. Just as He did with the Egyptians, He can and does cause the wisdom of those who strive against Him to falter. ***The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them*** (Jer. 8:9)? If we, as His children, choose to seek guidance from those that are entrenched in the world, then we will also find ourselves misled. God's Word is 100% truthful and accurate; it is the only source of wisdom that will lead us to Him.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path (Ps. 119:105).

Thought for the Day: *Atheistic, false teachings may seem to be strengthening their hold on the world, but we can take heart in the knowledge that humanity cannot create a system or state so secure that God cannot will it to crumble.*

Christ Revealed: As the One who will sit on the throne of David (Is. 16:5).

Word Studies: 16:3 **bewray** = betray; 16:11 **my bowels** = my inner being, heart; 17:11 **a heap** = a failure; 19:8 **angle** = hooks; 21:14 **prevented with their bread him that fled** = gave food and water to the fugitives.

Pray for Government Officials: Gov. Kim Reynolds (IA), Gov. Phil Scott (VT), Rep. Hakeem Jeffries (NY) • **Country:** Uruguay (3,332,972) South-eastern Coast of South America • Major Languages: Spanish, Portuguese, Brazilerio • Religious Freedom • 47.1% Roman Catholic; 34.3% Non-Catholic Christian (Protestant, Nondenominational); 0.3% Jewish; 17.2% Atheist/Agnostic; 1.1% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Seek the guidance of God in meekness (Ps. 25:9).

Optional Reading: Hebrews 12

Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the LORD hath spoken this word (Is. 24:1-3).

Chapters 24 – 27 of Isaiah are often referred to collectively as Isaiah's Apocalypse. Within these chapters, Isaiah addresses the Lord's ultimate adjudication of mankind and the final, permanent removal of evil from His creation. Isaiah's words are first intended for Judah, but the scope soon widens to include the whole of Israel and surrounding nations until they finally encompass the entire world. Christ Himself reaffirms the unwavering truth of Isaiah's words in the Book of Revelation, chapters 6 – 19.

One of the first points that Isaiah sought to make was that when the day comes, earthly rank and privilege will be of no consequence. The ***priest***, the ***master***, the ***mistress***, the ***seller***, the ***lender***, and the ***taker of usury*** (the money lender who charges interest) will face the same standard of judgment as the lay ***people***, the ***servant***, the ***maid***, the ***buyer***, and the ***borrower***. ***For there is no respect of persons with God*** (Acts 2:11).

This simple, straightforward concept is one that many of today's Christians seem to have trouble genuinely understanding. Even when we claim to believe that we are all equal in God's sight, we stubbornly cling to our social standing as 'proof' of our inherent righteousness. We take pride in our accomplishments and possessions and look down upon those of lesser means, arrogantly believing that their life is a direct result of poor choices and a lack of effort. We honestly believe that the comfortable life we lead is God's reward to us for a 'job well done' and that it ensures our place at God's side come the day of judgment. Ironically, this was the belief of many of

the inhabitants of Judah during the time of Isaiah. They took their prosperity and the prosperity of their nation to mean that God approved of their actions and lifestyles. They dismissed the warnings of Isaiah out of hand, believing themselves to be righteous and, therefore, exempt from the judgment of God.

God's Word is clear: ***For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*** (II Cor. 5:10). When we come before Christ, we will appear before Him stripped of all worldly standing. He will not care about our job, bank account, credit rating, or current address. He will not care if we are physically clean or dirty, well-dressed or in rags. The only thing that will matter is the state of our hearts. Do we stand before Him as His child, a faithful member of the body of Christ, or have we allowed ourselves to succumb to the self-deception of worldly righteousness? This is the question that every person ever born into this world will have to answer – there will be NO exceptions.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven (Matt. 7:21).

Thought for the Day: *The world teaches that a person's value is determined by their wealth and social status; we are accepting the world's judgment over God's when we look up to some and down on others.*

Christ Portrayed: By Eliakim, master of Hezekiah's household (Is. 22:20-22); what was said of him is true of Christ who is Master over the household of faith. ***Christ . . . a Son over His own house; whose house are we*** (Heb. 3:6; Gal. 6:10).

Word Studies: 22:1 **valley of vision** = Jerusalem; 22:2 **stirs** = shoutings; 23:13 **raised up** = destroyed; 24:7 **mourneth** = laments, sorrows; 24:15 **fires** = dawning light; 24:19 **clean dissolved** = split open; 24:23 **ancients** = elders; 26:7 **weigh** = make straight, lead in the right way.

Pray for Country: Uzbekistan (28,929,716) Central Asia • Major Languages: Uzbek, Russian • Limited religious freedom due to Islamic influence • 88% Muslim; 9% Eastern Orthodox; 3% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Ask the Lord to forgive your sins (Ps. 25:11).

Optional Reading: Hebrews 13

Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it (Is. 28:17-18).

By the time God sent the prophet Isaiah to minister to His people in the nation of Judah, the northern kingdom of Israel had already reached 'the point of no return.' Israel was destined to fall to the Assyrian empire within Isaiah's lifetime. Consequently, Isaiah frequently used the hapless nation as an example of the evil threatening to overtake Judah. Here in Chapter 28, Isaiah laid bare the truth of the coming fall of Samaria, the richly decadent capital of Israel. **Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine! Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand** (Is. 28:1-2).

As he spoke of the **drunkards of Ephraim**, Isaiah allowed God's disgust and sorrow at the choices of His people to come through. Those listening to Isaiah were quite familiar with the effects of too much wine. They knew that physical drunkenness caused a loss of perspective and emotional control. A drunken man might laugh even though nothing was funny or cry without provocation. He would often undertake actions that would be abhorrent to him in a sober state. Isaiah used this mental image to define the state of being of the leaders and citizens of Israel. They were 'drunk' on the 'wine' of power and prestige. Their future was set not because God had given up on them but because they embraced the freedom of their sin and had given up on God.

Isaiah then condemned the southern kingdom of Judah for following in the footsteps of Samaria. They, too, were partaking of the 'wine' of power and sin. They were taking **refuge of lies**

by attempting to forge a secret military alliance with Egypt. Even though God had told them otherwise, many believed that through **covenants** and **agreements**, they could save themselves. For those that held these beliefs, Isaiah had a straightforward message: ***your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.***

Just as a person does not become physically drunk on the first sip of alcohol, the backsliding Christian doesn't immediately lose sight of God as they take their first tentative steps into the world of sin. Sip by sip, sobriety begins to fade until suddenly drunkenness holds sway; sin by sin, the man that once sought God now takes **refuge** in the **lies** of the world. This is what we must guard against. This is what Isaiah is so fervently attempting to teach us. The way of the world leads to madness, destruction, and ultimately death. There is no exception. Salvation comes only to those that heed His Word and willingly build their lives upon God's cornerstone (Is. 28:16), namely, Jesus Christ our Lord.

But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage (Gal. 4:9)?

Thought for the Day: *Drunkenness is a perfect allegory for sin - an indulgence in temporary pleasure that only leaves us wanting and will inevitably lead to ruin.*

Christ Revealed: As the **precious** (Chief) **Corner Stone, a sure foundation** (Is. 28:16; Eph. 2:20-21; Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:10-12; Rom. 9:33; I Pet. 2:6-8).

Word Studies: 27:1 **piercing** = swift; 28:21 **strange** = awesome, unusual; 28:22 **bands be made strong** = punishment be made greater; 30:1 **cover with a covering** = give an offering; 30:3 **confusion** = humiliation, your undoing; 30:24 **ear** = plow.

Pray for Country: Vanuatu (266,937) South Pacific Ocean • Major Languages: Local Languages, Bislama, English, French • Religious Freedom • 55.6% Protestant; 13.1% Roman Catholic; 13.8% Other Christian; 5.6% Indigenous Beliefs; 9.6% Other; 1% None; 1.3% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Declare the wondrous works of God with thanksgiving (Ps. 26:6-7).

Optional Reading: James 1

Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; He will come and save you (Is. 35:3-4).

The first 34 chapters of the Book of Isaiah have been primarily focused on delivering God's message of judgment in response to the utter rejection of Him by Israel, Judah, and the world. Although the chapters have been seasoned with promises of hope and restoration for a faithful remnant, they have dealt primarily with the negative consequences of turning away from God. Chapter 35 is written with a different audience in mind. Its verses are intended not as a warning of judgment for those that still need to seek God but as a promise of grace to those who already belong to Him.

The time in which Isaiah prophesied was one of swiftly changing political and religious ideals. The vast majority of the people lived and worshiped according to the will of whoever was king. Even when they paid lip service to the Lord, their allegiance was not to Him but to their earthly king. For those that truly loved and worshiped the Lord, it was a time of fear and uncertainty. They watched the ungodly flourish, and they grew increasingly fearful of the influence and might of the heathen countries surrounding them. Isaiah's words flowed forth as a balm to their wearied souls. His message was intended to soothe their anxiety and allay their fears. ***Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; He will come and save you.***

This message is as desperately needed by today's true believers as it was in the time of Isaiah. We live in a chaotic world filled with violence and questionable morality. News headlines denoting mass shootings, terrorist attacks, and random acts of violence are far too commonplace. Natural disasters and acts of war kill tens of thousands yearly. Fear in the face of this chaos is a natural response, but for children of the Living God, it doesn't have to be!

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us (Rom. 8:31)? We belong to God, and for this reason, we live in a state of grace. ***Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness*** (Is. 41:10). No matter what is happening in the world around us, or how much strife and trouble might enter into our day to day lives, we ultimately have nothing to fear. We are in the world, but we are not of it (John 17:14). We are here so that we might share God's love with others and so that we might, through the light of Christ within us, illuminate the path upon which He can be found. This is not our home, however, and nothing we experience here can permanently damage us. We will one day go home, and the evil of this world will not be allowed to follow. We have God's promise.

And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life (Rev. 21:27).

Thought for the Day: *This world will face great upheaval. We may rejoice in that knowledge, for we know it is all a part of God's plan.*

Christ Revealed: As the One who, in judgment, wields ***the sword of the LORD*** (Is. 34:6). ***Out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations*** (Rev. 19:15).

Word Studies: 32:2 **covert** = shelter; **tempest** = storm; 32:5 **liberal** = noble; **churl** = deceitful; 32:7 **instruments** = schemes; 32:19 **low in a low place** = completely destroyed; 33:9 **hewn down** = destroyed.

Pray for Government Officials: Rep. Abigail Spanberger (VA), Rep. Chip Roy (TX) • **Country:** Venezuela (28,868,486) Northern coast of South America • Major Languages: Spanish, Indigenous Dialects • Religious Freedom • 96% Roman Catholic; 2% Protestant; 2% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Seek the Lord in times of trouble; He will shelter you (Ps. 27:5).

Optional Reading: James 2

In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live. Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, And said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech Thee, how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore (Is. 38:1-3).

Yesterday we read of Hezekiah's great prayer of faith, which led to the deliverance of Judah from the hands of the Assyrians. Today we will examine another of Hezekiah's prayers. Whereas yesterday's prayer covered the fate of a nation, the one we read today is of a much more personal nature. Hezekiah was gravely ill and most likely suspected his death was near. Still, when Isaiah arrived with word from the Lord that confirmed his suspicions, Hezekiah broke down. In his grief, he turned once more to the One that he knew had the power to help him. Unlike his eloquent prayer in the Temple, this one was raw and emotional. ***Remember now, O LORD, I beseech Thee, how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.***

It is evident from Hezekiah's distress that he strongly desired to continue living, but it is important to note that his wishes were not the focal point of his prayer. If we look closely, we will find that Hezekiah asked for nothing more than to be remembered by God. The Lord's response was nothing short of miraculous. ***Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years (Is. 38:5).*** God heard, saw, and responded to even that which Hezekiah could not bring himself to voice.

Because you have prayed, I have heard. God's reply reaffirmed the relationship that He has established with us, His creation. He knows our needs, wants, wishes, and desires before we voice them. ***Be not ye therefore like unto them: for***

your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him (Matt. 6:8). Even when we are overwhelmed to the point that we don't know what to ask, God still understands our needs (Rom. 8:26-27). By coming to Him in prayer, we acknowledge that we depend on Him for their fulfillment. For God's children, prayer is as necessary as breathing. God has a detailed, unchanging plan for this world, but our role in that plan can most certainly change. Through prayer, we stay in constant contact with the Lord. We stay in sync with God by keeping the lines of communication open, thus enabling us to follow the primary path He has chosen for us. When we are scared or in need, as Hezekiah was, we first need to take it to God. That does not guarantee that we will get the outcome we want, but it does assure us that we will get the support we need. Regardless of His answer to our prayer, it will also allow us to know with certainty that we are staying on the path He has marked.

Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms (James 5:13).

Thought for the Day: *God knows everything we are going to say, but he still wants us to tell Him.*

Christ Revealed: As ***the Creator*** (Is. 40:28; comp. John 1:1-3); as the ***Shepherd*** (Is. 40:11; comp. John 10:11); as the ***Redeemer*** (Is. 41:14; compare Gal. 3:13; I Pet. 1:18-19; Rev. 5:9).

Word Studies: 38:10 **residue** = remainder; 40:2 **comfortably** = kindly and tenderly; 40:12 **meted out** = measured; **span** = spread of the fingers; 42:4 **isles** = Gentiles are mentioned in Is. 42:1, so the isles in 42:4 refer to the isles of the Gentiles (see Gen. 10:5); 42:13 **jealousy** = His fury.

Pray for Country: Vietnam (93,421,835) Southeast Asia • Major Languages: Vietnamese, English • Very strict control of Christians in the North; the South has been more lenient but is getting tighter • 9.3% Buddhist; 6.7% Catholic; 1.5% Hoa Hao; 1.1% Cao Dai; 0.5% Protestant; 0.1% Muslim; 80.8% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Ask the Lord to teach you His ways (Ps. 27:11).

Optional Reading: James 3

Thus saith the LORD, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters; Which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow. Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert (Is. 43:16-19).

The Word of God is filled with the wonders He has done in times past. ***In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*** (Gen. 1:1). We are given ample opportunities to marvel at His power and greatness, beginning with the majesty of creation. From the destruction of nearly all of creation (6:9-9:17) to the quiet act of making fertile a barren womb (18:10), we have been privileged to see God's plan at work. We have witnessed the plagues of Egypt (Ex. 7:14-11:10) and the divine parting of the Red Sea (14:15-29). We have watched as a young shepherd boy took down a mighty giant (I Sam. 17:1-50), and later as God installed that self-same shepherd boy on the throne of Israel, promising that his line would reign in perpetuity (II Sam. 7:12-16).

God has given us these detailed accounts so that we might remember all He has done to prepare us to receive Him, but it is not His intention that we dwell on what is past. ***Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it?*** Our God is a living God; He is here with us now, in the present, and He is preparing the way for us in the future. The past's miracles are faded memories, but if we open our eyes, hearts, and minds to His presence, we will be able to fully experience the miracles of today.

God is at work in our world today. He is not still, nor is He hidden. Yet just as in Biblical times, He is visible only to those who choose to see him. ***But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light***

of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them (II Cor. 4:3-4). There are many that claim to believe in God that also claim the time of miracles is ended. They have closed their hearts to the present and worship only based on ideals from times past. It is to these people that God is speaking here. Wake up! Look around! Stretch out your senses and discover the power of the Lord! God is here, God is now, and His best work is yet to come!

Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless (II Pet. 3:12-14).

Thought for the Day: If our attention is focused on the world's vices, then it is impossible for us to perceive God.

Christ Revealed: As the ***Redeemer*** (Is. 43:1; 44:22-24). Through His death on the cross, Christ has redeemed (bought back) all who trust Him as their Savior (I Cor. 6:20; Gal. 4:4-5; Titus 2:13-14; I Pet. 1:18-19).

Word Studies: 43:2 **fire** = oppression; **kindle upon** = consume; 43:13 **let it** = prevent it from happening; 44:9 **delectable** = cherished; 45:1 **loose the loins of** = weaken; **two leaved gates** = double gates; 46:12 **stout-hearted** = stubborn-minded.

Pray for Staff: Gilbert Palafox • **Government Officials:** Sen. Roger Marshall (KS) • **Country:** Virgin Islands, U.S. (104,170) Caribbean • **Major Languages:** English, Spanish (Creole) • **Religious Freedom** • 59% Protestant; 34% Roman Catholic; 7% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Thank the Lord for hearing your prayers (Ps. 28:6-7).

Optional Reading: James 4

Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted His people, and will have mercy upon His afflicted. But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my LORD hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee (Is. 49:13-15).

Having spoken of the evils that would eventually lead Judah into captivity, the Lord now had Isaiah begin to minister to a generation that had not yet been conceived, a generation that would one day endure captivity at the hands of the Babylonians. On that day, the Lord knew that His children would cry out, ***The LORD hath forsaken me, and my LORD hath forgotten me***, and He hastened to have Isaiah assure them that would not be the case. ***Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands; thy walls are continually before Me*** (Is. 49:16). Unlike earthly parents, whose love might be conditional and therefore revocable, our heavenly Father's love is boundless. He will not forget His people because it is not in His nature to do so.

Christians of today find it easy to accept the suffering of the ungodly. We even look upon the suffering of other Christians with jaded and knowing eyes, believing that they must have secret sins and vices that led to their downfall. We believe that God is very much present, even in the face of their sufferings. Yet when it comes to facing our own trials and tribulations, many of us are quick to cry out, just as the exiles did, ***the LORD hath forsaken me, and my LORD hath forgotten me***. Instead of examining our lives for sins and faults that might have precipitated our situation or seeking to discover God's lesson, we assume God has lost sight of us.

Through Isaiah, God sought to remind His people that they were never alone, no matter where they were or what circumstances surrounded them. He was not speaking to those who had given up on God but rather to those who greatly suffered

under the misguided belief that God, whom they still loved, had given up on them. ***Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God*** (Is. 50:10).

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1). As children of a loving God, we must never doubt His presence in our lives. When we give in to our human natures and succumb to the temptation of sin, we might be tempted to believe that we have succeeded in pushing God away, but nothing could be further from the truth. He is with us in our suffering, even as He was with the Israelites in exile. If we allow Him to, He will use our suffering to remold and restore us to His perfect will. As we still ourselves before Him, waiting in earnest, continuous prayer, let us endeavor to remember how deeply He loves us and how far He has been willing to go so that we might one day be able to come home.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

Thought for the Day: *To speak as if we are forsaken and forgotten by God reveals a lack of faith in Him.*

Christ Revealed: As the ***Light to the Gentiles*** (nations) (Is. 49:6). Jesus said: ***I am the Light of the world*** (John 8:12; 9:5; Luke 2:32; Acts 13:47; 26:23).

Word Studies: 47:8 **carelessly** = securely; 47:11 **put it off** = avert or avoid it; 47:15 **quarter** = own region; 48:2 **stay** = rely; 48:10 **refined** = tested; **not with silver** = not like silver, which requires heat you could not bear; 49:21 **removing** = wandering.

Pray for Staff: Jennifer Palafox, Bible Pathway Ministry President • **Country:** Wallis & Futuna (455,000) South Pacific • **Major Languages:** Wallisian, Futunian, French • **Religious Freedom** • 99% Roman Catholic; 1% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Sing praises to the Lord (Ps. 30:4).

Optional Reading: James 5

H*e is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all* (Is.53:3-6).

Approximately 700 years before the physical birth of the Son of God, Isaiah preached the gospel of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Although Isaiah's original audience did not fully understand his message, it is forever recorded in God's Word as an indelible connection between the past and the present. ***I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty*** (Rev. 1:8). God's plan of salvation for mankind did not begin in a manger in Bethlehem. It started on the day that God first breathed life into the nostrils of Adam (Gen. 2:7). His message to us does not begin with chapter one, verse one of the Book of Matthew, but rather ***in the beginning*** (when) ***God created the heaven and the earth*** (Gen. 1:1).

Therefore the LORD himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel (Is. 7:14; see also Matt. 1:22-23). Isaiah spoke of a miraculous birth and a beloved Savior. ***For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counseller, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace*** (Is. 9:6; see also Eph. 2:13-18). He embraced the truth that this Savior would bring redemption to God's children and judgment to His enemies (Is. 11:1-16). Isaiah proclaimed this good news for all to hear.

With faith in his God, however, Isaiah did not stop there. Chapter 53 of the Book of Isaiah contains one of the most

graphic and heartbreaking accounts of the suffering of Jesus Christ that has ever been recorded. Isaiah knew that in order to save us, Jesus would first have to willingly bear the weight of all our sins. He would have to suffer the punishments mankind had rightly earned, and he would selflessly have to pay the terrible debt that we owed. ***He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.***

Isaiah shared this message with a lost and dying world because He loved his God and fellow man. Jesus loved us enough to suffer and die in our stead. Still, each person that reaches the end of their life without accepting Him as their personal Savior means that a portion of His suffering was done in vain (Gal. 5:4). The more people that we can introduce to His gospel, the more who will be able to understand and appreciate the suffering of Christ.

Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:45-47).

Thought for the Day: *The sad irony of lives ending without God in their hearts is that they always had a place in His.*

Christ Revealed: As the One who was rejected by His own people (Is. 53:3; comp. Luke 23:18; John 1:11); remained silent when He was falsely accused (Is. 53:7; Mark 15:3-5); was buried with the rich (Is. 53:9; Matt. 27:57-60); and was crucified with sinners (Is. 53:12; Mark 15:27-28).

Word Studies: 52:1 **uncircumcised** = heathen (those without a covenant with God); 52:10 **made bare His holy arm** = revealed His power; 52:12 **rereward** = rear guard; 52:14 **visage** = appearance, countenance.

Pray for Government Official: Rep. Daniel Kildee (MI) • **Country:** Western Sahara (554,795) Northern Africa • Major Language: Arabic • 100% Muslim • Prayer Suggestion: Confess your sins to the Lord; He is quick to forgive (Ps. 32:5).

Optional Reading: I Peter 1

The Spirit of the LORD God is upon Me; because the LORD hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn (Is. 61:1-2).

Chapter 61 of the Book of Isaiah is a song of immense joy and celebration. We only need to read the first two verses to discover from whose point of view the narrative is being told. Jesus Christ, Son of God and Savior of all, is the only person ever to have existed who set out to fulfill these verses (Luke 4:17-19) and achieved everything He set out to do. As He reached the end of His earthly life, He knelt in prayer before His Father and proclaimed, ***I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do*** (John 17:4).

Jesus, our Savior and King, came to earth not to rule but to serve. ***And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many*** (Matt. 20:27-28). His mission was ***to bind up the brokenhearted*** and ***to proclaim liberty to the captives*** (of sin). He walked this earth bestowing the love of the Father on all who were in need, and through His blood sacrifice, He opened ***the prison*** of sin and offered freedom to all that were previously ***bound***. He was homeless, hungry, tired, dirty, and uncomfortable during much of His earthly ministry. Nevertheless, he was filled with a fierce, unfailing joy as He went about fulfilling God's plan of salvation. ***Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God*** (Heb. 12:2).

And He said to them all, If any man will come after me,

let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me (Luke 9:23). We, too, have been called to take up the mantle of the servant of God. As God is holy, we must also seek to be holy as we strive to carry out our Master's will (1 Pet. 1:16). We now bear the responsibility to ***proclaim liberty*** (in the form of the gospel of Christ) to those who are still held captive in sin. We have been granted the privilege to share the love of God with all of humanity as we feed the hungry, house the stranger, clothe the naked, visit the sick, and minister to the imprisoned (Matt. 25:34-36). All of this we do to uplift our fellow man and to glorify the God we serve. As we follow Christ's example, we will find true joy in any sacrifice we make that leads to an improvement in the life of another.

These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is My commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends (John 15:11-13).

Thought for the Day: *Jesus walked with us, died for us, and returned to us; it is only fitting that we stay at His side throughout our lives.*

Christ Revealed: As the One anointed ***to preach Good Tidings*** (Is. 61:1).

Word Studies: 60:5 **see, and flow together** = become enlightened, and shine forth the Light of God; **fear** = be in awe (be amazed at what God is doing), and then when that has registered, comes the joy; 61:3 **appoint** = impart comfort; 62:4 **Hephzibah** = My delight is in her; **Beulah** = married; 63:15 **the sounding of thy bowels** = the yearning affection of your heart.

Pray for Staff: Judy McCrary • **Country:** Yemen (26,052,966) Southwestern Arabia • Major Language: Arabic • Attempts to convert Muslims to Christ are fiercely opposed • Muslim; Small number of Christian, Jewish, Hindu • **Prayer Suggestion:** Be glad in the Lord and rejoice at all times (Ps. 32:11).

Optional Reading: 1 Peter 2

He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before Mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not (Is. 66:3-4).

Today's reading shows us that Isaiah had reached the end of his patience with his countrymen. God's message was clear and understandable to his ears, but they'd somehow managed to miss the point entirely. On a national scale, nothing had changed, and nothing was going to change (Is. 65:2). The southern kingdom of Judah would fall to her enemies just as had the northern kingdom of Israel. God's people had turned their backs on Him, and they would be judged accordingly. **Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before Mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not** (65:12).

Isaiah made one last attempt to explain why that would happen. His intended audience had narrowed down from all Judeans to only those who were still trying (however tentatively) to live within the will of God. To these people, Isaiah offered explanation, support, and, most importantly, hope. **Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at His word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for My name's sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but He shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed** (66:5).

The Temple at Jerusalem was a busy place, but it was busy for all the wrong reasons. People went about their business as they saw fit, using sacrifices and proffering worship to God

as a means of purchasing the right to continue living as they chose. Does that sound familiar? It should. Many self-professed Christians today claim that God's redeeming grace means they are free to live and act however they choose. They ignore the dictates of God's Word with no guilt or fear of consequences, believing that their public worship and profession that they have been saved in Jesus is all that is required to clear their slate with God permanently. Anyone who attempts to share the fullness of God's Word with them is summarily dismissed, often with accusations of being a judgmental and legalistic person who doesn't understand the love of Christ.

But just because a belief is in the minority doesn't make it wrong. Christ's teachings are clear. Claiming to know Him isn't enough; He must know us in return. Only through complete surrender to Him will we truly come to know Him and find the forgiveness and redemption we seek. And once we find it, once we enter into the body of Christ and are reformed in His love, we'll understand that true freedom comes from living for Him.

Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity (Matt. 7:22-23).

Thought for the Day: *Active faith is not just another extra-curricular activity.*

Christ Revealed: As the Creator of ***new heavens and a new earth*** (Is. 65:17; 66:22; comp. John 1:1-3; II Pet. 3:13). As the One whose glory will be declared among the nations (Is. 66:18-19; Rev. 5:12-13).

Word Studies: 64:3 **terrible** = awesome, revered greatly, greatly to be feared; 64:11 **are laid waste** = have been destroyed; 65:14 **howl for vexation of spirit** = cry out in misery; 66:6 **voice** = sound.

Pray for Staff: Jennifer Palafox • **Government Official:** Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders (AR) • **Country:** Zambia (14,638,505) Southern Africa • Major Languages: Bembe, Nyanja, Tonga • Religious Freedom • 75.3% Protestant; 20.2% Roman Catholic; 2.7% Other (Muslim Buddhist, Hindu, Bahai); 1.8% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Praise God in prayer and with singing, for His Word is pure and His works are done in truth (Ps. 33:2-4).

Optional Reading: I Peter 3

Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the firstfruits of His increase: all that devour Him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD (Jer. 2:2-3).

Jeremiah's ministry opened on a bittersweet note. ***Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee.*** Jeremiah recounts the Lord's memories of the early years of His relationship with the then-undivided nation of Israel. He reminds them of the love and trust their ancestors had for Him as they ***wentest after Me*** (God) ***in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.*** He wanted them to cast their minds back and open their hearts to the joy of being a chosen child of God. God was not implying that their ancestors had evidenced perfect devotion or obedience but rather that, even in their missteps, their hearts had belonged to Him. After establishing them in the land of Promise, he had given their enemies into their hands. ***Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the firstfruits of His increase: all that devour Him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD.*** Israel had loved God, and she had been richly blessed above all nations. ***Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle*** (Deut. 7:14).

God's next question is both plaintive and rhetorical, ***Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in Me, that they are gone far from Me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain*** (Jer. 2:5). What did I do? How did I wrong you? What drove you away? God knew He had done nothing wrong; His people had never suffered any injustice at His hands. It was not in His nature to have done so, ***to shew that the LORD is upright: He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him*** (Ps. 92:15), and God never acts contrary to His nature (James 1:17). The question was asked not because He needed an answer but because He needed them to realize that there was no answer. It was inconceivable

that their **fathers** had turned away due to the **iniquity** of the Lord. The answer to “why” would only be found by examining their hearts, not God’s actions.

Our relationship with Him is something that God wants us to cherish enough that we put it first before everything else in our lives. Although most start out with the best of intentions to do just that, once the newness wears off, many of us fall into the trap of compartmentalizing our faith. The more we do without Him, the more our worldly nature reasserts itself, and the less we rely on Him for guidance and support. The less we rely on Him, the less we feel His presence. Eventually, He becomes someone we think about for an hour or two on Sunday morning and ignore for the rest of the week. God has a message to all who have found themselves in this situation: ***I remember thee... when thou wentest after Me.*** He is there; He remembers. Cast your mind back, recapture the joy and unwavering commitment you felt at the blooming of your faith, and remember Him, too.

And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light (Rom. 13:11-12).

Thought for to Day: *Independence is a myth perpetuated by society; either we follow God, or we are led around by the world.*

Christ Revealed: As ***the Fountain of Living Waters*** (Jer.2:13). ***Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink*** (John 7:37-38; also 4:1-26).

Word Studies: 2:3 **offend** = be held guilty; 2:14 **spoiled** = laid waste, plundered; 2:18 **Sihor** = the Nile River; **the river** = the Euphrates; 2:31 **lords** = independent; 2:33 **trimmest . . . thy way to seek love** = do good (as a show to impress) to get love; 3:2 **been lien with** = acted like a prostitute; 3:9 **lightness** = shameless behavior; 3:10 **feignedly** = deceptively.

Pray for Government Officials: Rep. Mark Pocan (WI), Sen. Bill Hagerty (TN)
• **Country:** Zimbabwe (13,771,721) South-Central Africa • **Major Languages:** English, Shona, Sindebele • **Limited Religious Freedom** • 50% Syncretic (Part Christian, Part Indigenous Beliefs); 25% Christian; 24% Indigenous Beliefs; 1% Muslim/Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Bless the Lord at all times regardless of circumstances (Ps. 34:1).

Optional Reading: I Peter 4

And it shall come to pass at that day, saith the LORD, that the heart of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princes; and the priests shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder. Then said I, Ah, LORD God! surely Thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul (Jer. 4:9-10).

The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and My people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof (Jer. 5:31)? A quick comparison between the nation of Judah in the time of Jeremiah and most of the ‘progressive’ countries in the world today uncovers many startling similarities, but one of the most obvious involves perceptions of reality and the standards used to determine the will of God.

Judah was considered a prosperous, forward-thinking nation by worldly standards. The priests, landowners, merchants, and tradesmen all lived lives of relative ease; their needs were met, and their wants were easily satisfied. Those who struggled in Judean society were considered either lazy and underachieving (the poor but able-bodied) or cursed by God (disabled). With the noted exception of Jeremiah, all of her wisemen, prophets, and priests believed that God’s chosen people were under His permanent protection and, therefore, safe. ***They say still unto them that despise Me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you (23:17).*** It’s little wonder that the citizens of Judah preferred the dreams of the majority to the dire warnings of Jeremiah.

From our readings of the Books of First and Second Kings, First and Second Chronicles, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, we can discern that the people had a hard time distinguishing God’s will from their own, believing that any time they were happy with their lives, God was happy with them. They interpreted His Word as they saw fit, adhering to the parts they liked and either explaining away or outright ignoring the rest. ***And though they say, The LORD liveth; surely they swear falsely (5:2).*** The only time they attempted to rely on the Lord in any credible way

was when trouble befell them, and each time it was the same, ***the heart of the princes; and the priests were astonished, and the prophets*** wondered. The first reaction was always to question God. Why? Why is this happening? Why did You let us believe everything was okay if it wasn't? ***Then said I, Ah, LORD God! surely Thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul.*** But God had never deceived them; they had deceived themselves.

That selfsame deception runs rampant in today's world. God's Word is more widely known than ever before, but it is also more readily picked apart. False prophets are everywhere, teaching the best ways to go about adding God into one's life while 'safely' interpreting the Word through the filter of our advanced, enlightened society. By ignoring or dismissing any of the 'unpleasant' parts of the Word, the new self-proclaimed Christian can bask in God's perceived favor without any substantial changes in their lives. Sadly, they will be among the first to say, "But God, you never told me...."

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (II Tim. 4:3-4).

Thought for the Day: *For many, a life without tribulation is the greatest test of all, as it leads us to misjudge our desperate need for God.*

Christ Portrayed: By Jeremiah, whom God commissioned to reveal His Truth (Jer. 4:2).

Word Studies: 4:6 **retire, stay not** = go in haste to take refuge, don't delay; 4:22 **sottish** = devoid of spiritual understanding; 5:10 **battlements** = branches; 5:13 **wind** = full of words, but speaking nothing from God; 5:30 **wonderful** = monstrous, shocking; 6:30 **reprobate silver** = rejected, despised, trash.

Pray for Government Officials: Rep. Maxine Waters (CA), Sen. John Fetterman (PA) • **Country:** Afghanistan (31,822,848) Central Asia • Major Languages: Dari, Pashto, Uzbek, Turkmen • Hostile to Christian evangelization. For a Muslim to convert to Christianity is automatic execution • 99% Muslim; 1% Other (Sikh, Hindu, Baha'i, Christian,) • **Prayer Suggestion:** Magnify the Lord; exalt His Name (Ps. 34:3).

Optional Reading: I Peter 5

The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD (Jer. 7:1-2).

Many of us today are guilty of reading the Book of Jeremiah as if it were simply a history book detailing the misadventures of people that lived long ago. We shake our heads at their stubborn worldly behavior and wonder how they could have been so blind to the Lord's warnings. This is not how God intends for us to read His Word. The Bible consists of the living Word (Heb. 4:12), and it is as active and applicable to modern life as it was on the day it was first uttered and recorded. With that fact in mind, let's re-read Jeremiah's message as he stood **in the gate of the LORD's house.**

It was **in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah** (26:1), during one of three major Feasts (Festivals) to which all Jewish males were required to come to Jerusalem, that God instructed Jeremiah to stand in the Temple's entrance **and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD.** On what was usually a day of joyful celebration, Jeremiah pronounced a most severe and harsh accusation from the Lord: **Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; And come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD** (7:9-11).

These words infuriated all those that heard them. They believed they were worshiping God in full accord with His directives. Jeremiah had publicly called them out for sins that they felt had nothing to do with their worship in the Temple, and they'd had enough. As one, the priests, prophets, and laypeople rejected the condemnation of the 'narrow-minded' Jeremiah.

What would happen if Jeremiah stood in the entranceway of

our churches on Easter Sunday? Could we face God's truth as we passed by him? As he ran through the list of sins, including adultery, lying, greed, and idol worship (remember, an idol is anything you hold in higher esteem than God), would we react with conviction or discomfort? Would we examine our hearts before approaching God, or would we angrily push past Jeremiah and accuse him of trying to ruin our Easter Celebration with his vile and vicious accusations?

Through God's living Word, Jeremiah is standing at the doorway of every church. Although to the unrepentant sinner, his presence presents an unwelcome accusation, to the child of God, it should serve as a reminder that we are accountable to God for everything we do, whether it 'officially' pertains to worship or not. He has been placed there to convict us of our sins, not out of malice, but out of a sincere desire to turn our hearts back to God.

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates (II Cor. 13:5)?

Thought for to Day: *The foolish read God's Word and believe themselves better than their ancestors; the wise read it and reflect on our similarities in the eyes of God.*

Christ Revealed: As the One who demanded a cleansed Temple (Jer. 7:1-11). Jesus cleansed the Temple and said: ***My House shall be called of all nations the House of Prayer*** (Mark 11:17).

Word Studies: 7:15 **the whole seed of Ephraim** = all the people of the Northern Kingdom; 7:33 **fray** = frighten; 9:7 **melt them, and try them** = refine them by testing with affliction; 10:22 **noise of the bruit** = sound of a rumor.

Pray for Government Officials: Gov. Phil Murphy (NJ), Sen. Pete Ricketts (NE), Rep. Earl Blumenauer (OR), Rep. Don Bacon (NE) • **Country:** Albania (3,020,209) Southeastern Europe • Major Language: Albanian • Religious Freedom • 56.7% Muslim; 10% Roman Catholic; 6.8% Orthodox; 2.5% Atheist; 2.1% Bektashi; 5.7% Other; 16.2% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray and the Lord will free you from your fears (Ps. 34:4).

Optional Reading: II Peter 1

Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud: for the **LORD** hath spoken. Give glory to the **LORD** your God, before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness. But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the **LORD's** flock is carried away captive (Jer. 13:15-17).

The citizens of Judah to whom Jeremiah was instructed to deliver his messages were arrogant and proud. They lived in a peaceful and prosperous nation under the banner of God, believing themselves to be protected by His name and thus untouchable, regardless of their day-to-day behaviors. Fully content with their lives, they saw no reason to change. Chapter 13 of the Book of Jeremiah addresses the hypocritical nature of this attitude and issues a strong warning of what would happen if it continued unchecked.

Thus saith the LORD unto me, Go and get thee a linen girdle, and put it upon thy loins, and put it not in water (Jer. 13:1). The **linen girdle** God instructed Jeremiah to wear was a priestly garment (Lev. 16:4), a visual symbol of purity and service. Linen was a costly and delicate material, and it would have been a noticeable step above Jeremiah's traditional clothing. While bound to Jeremiah, the girdle represented the close, connected relationship that the Lord sought with His people. God then commanded Jeremiah, **Take the girdle that thou hast got, which is upon thy loins, and arise, go to Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole of the rock** (13:4). Many days later, God sent him back to dig it up. **Then I went to Euphrates, and digged, and took the girdle from the place where I had hid it: and, behold, the girdle was marred, it was profitable for nothing** (13:7). The once pristine garment was utterly ruined. Where it had been a symbol of righteousness and good standing while bound and tended, now it revealed the terrible price of separation and neglect, arguably still a linen girdle in name, but one whose function had been destroyed

and whose existence was now meaningless.

This evil people, which refuse to hear My words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing. For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto Me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the LORD; that they might be unto Me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear (13:9-11). When we claim a relationship with Christ yet keep it tucked away and neglected in some dark corner while we are busy living our daily lives under the direction of ***the imagination of our hearts***, then that claim becomes nothing more than empty words, no more useful to us or God than the ruined ***linen girdle*** was to Jeremiah. Judah ignored God's warning, just as He knew she would. But we still have a chance to heed it. ***Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud: for the LORD hath spoken.***

Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me (Matt. 16:24).

Thought for to Day: *Untended faith will cool and eventually be doused entirely.*

Christ Revealed: As ***the Hope of Israel, the Saviour*** (Jer. 14:8). Christ is the only ***Hope*** of all mankind. ***Looking for that blessed Hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*** (Titus 2:13).

Word Studies: 11:15 **wrought lewdness** = done evil things; 11:23 **visitation** = judgment; 12:2 **reins** = heart; 13:22 **skirts discovered . . . heels made bare** = fine clothes torn off as you are driven into exile, barefoot (comp. Nah. 3:5).

Pray for one another • **Country:** Algeria (38,813,722) North Africa • Major Languages: Arabic, French • Opposition to the Gospel is intense • 99% Muslim (State Religion); 1% Christian and Jewish • **Prayer Suggestion:** Revere and worship the Lord with godly fear and you will have no want (Ps. 34:9).

Optional Reading: II Peter 2

Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit (Jer. 17:5-8).

We tend to think of curses as something that befalls us from an outside source, such as the ones God warned the Israelites they would face if they chose not to obey Him. **But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee** (Deut. 28:15). But the truth is, the most dangerous curse mankind will ever face is 100% self-inflicted. **Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.**

Trust is rooted in self-preservation and begins with a single choice. We look at our lives, examine the world around us, and determine what we believe will best keep us from harm. Once we make that determination, we extend our trust. When we trust something, we expect it to act in such a way that promotes our well-being—physical, mental, or emotional. After being introduced to the concept of God and His Word, the question of trust takes on a deeper meaning. Trusting in God means taking a leap of faith instead of relying on concrete proof. It also means looking at the larger picture rather than narrowly focusing on worldly concepts of well-being. To the world, trust in God is a nonsensical concept, but to the true believer, the choice to trust in God is the greatest gift they could give themselves.

When a person chooses to place their ultimate trust in mankind over God, they curse themselves to a life of disap-

pointment and betrayal. No other outcome is possible, no matter how carefully they vet the objects of their trust. Even the most righteous human is sinful and prone to error, easily swayed by emotions and the constantly shifting sands of public opinion. Those who claim only to trust in themselves will also fail to find the secure footing they seek, as we are even quicker to lie to ourselves than we are to others. Trust in mankind is steeped in fear. Fear of change, fear of loss, fear of the unknown, fear of death.

When we choose to trust in God over mankind, our whole world opens up. Peace replaces fear as the underlying emotion on which our lives are built, and Godly truth and righteousness form a solid, never shifting foundation upon which we can stand. We face the world with the comfortable, quiet confidence of one who already knows the ending and thus is content to experience whatever comes along the way. Freed from our need to expect perfection where none can be found, we liberally season our interactions with grace, thus improving our relationships with our fellow man. Our hope is in the Lord, and in Him, we are complete.

Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen (Rom. 15:33)

Thought for the Day: *To believe in mankind is to understand our nature and failings with a forgiving spirit, not to trust in our virtuous capacities.*

Christ Revealed: By Jeremiah's words to God: ***Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart*** (Jer. 15:16). Jesus said: ***The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are Life*** (John 6:63).

Word Studies: 15:1 **toward** = favorable to; 15:6 **repenting** = grieving over and giving you another chance; 17:10 **try the reins** = test the heart; 18:11 **frame** = prepare; 18:15 **in a way not cast up** = on paths of sin, not ways of righteousness and honor.

Pray for Government Official: Rep. Jay Obernolte (CA) • **Country:** American Samoa (54,517) South Pacific Ocean • Major Languages: Samoan, English • Religious Freedom • 50% Christian Congregationalist; 20% Roman Catholic; 30% Protestant/Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray that God will keep you from speaking evil (Ps. 34:13).

Optional Reading: II Peter 3

And say, Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David, thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates: Thus saith the LORD; Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place. For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people. But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation (Jer. 22:2-5).

Two of the issues we've seen over and over again in our studies of the kings of Judah are a sense of entitlement and a belief in inherited righteousness. In accordance with God's promise, all the Judean kings were of the house of David. ***I will be His father, and he shall be My son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But My mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever*** (II Sam. 7:14-16). While some, such as Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah, took God's words as a solemn charge to serve as His servant and lead the nation per His will, the majority took them to mean they were automatically stamped with God's seal of approval and therefore had free rein to run the kingdom as they saw fit. They blatantly ignored and, at times, openly scoffed at the corrections and warnings issued by God's prophets.

The problem with the kings' interpretation of God's promise was two-fold. First, they glossed over the part where God stated He would hold David's descendants responsible for their iniquities. Second, they placed limitations on God by arrogantly assuming that the kingdom and throne of David to which He referred were societal constructs devised and defined by man.

They equated God's promise to the retention of worldly power and believed said power was theirs to wield by right of birth. The Lord sent Jeremiah to King Jehoiakim, son and heir of Josiah, with a starkly foreboding message: Your forebearers' righteousness won't save you. Either commit to serving the Lord, or all earthly power will be stripped from you.

God's promise was still in full effect. The throne of David would not be usurped, but that did not mean it couldn't sit empty. David's house would be preserved, but that didn't mean it would retain earthly power. As for David's kingdom, that was devised and defined by God. It had no earthly borders and was unaffected by the machinations of man. God and God alone controlled its destiny. ***Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth*** (Jer.23:5).

These two things are equally true. God always keeps His promises, and His promises are made in alignment with His will and His Word. If anyone believes that one of God's promises exempts them from living according to His Word's dictates, then their interpretation of His promise is faulty.

Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of Thy righteous judgments endureth for ever (Ps. 119:160).

Thought for the Day: *God's grace cannot be abused or corrupted, and His Words cannot be used against Him.*

Christ Revealed: As the One who pronounces judgment upon those who refuse to obey His Word (Jer. 19:15). ***The Father . . . committed all judgment unto the Son*** (John 5:22).

Word Studies: 19:3 **his ears shall tingle** = will be utterly stunned by the news; 19:9 **straitness** = anguish, distress; 20:3 **Magor-missabib** = terror on every side; 20:11 **mighty terrible One** = awe-inspiring One, heroic Champion.

Pray for Staff: Gilbert Palafox • **Government Official:** Rep. James Comer (KY) • **Country:** Andorra (85,458) Southwestern Europe-Eastern Pyrenees • Major Languages: Catalan, French • Religious Freedom • Predominant Roman Catholic; Other (Muslim, Hindu, Jew, Anglican, Seventh-Day Adventist, Baha'i, Unification Church, Christian, Mormon, Jehovah's Witness) • **Prayer Suggestion:** Call to the Lord for help; He will save you out of your troubles (Ps. 34:17).

Optional Reading: I John 1

And I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (Jer. 23:3-6).

As we read through the books of the prophets, including the Book of Jeremiah, we are given simultaneous insight into the highest of highs and the lowest of lows. God's people had committed grievous sins and lived in the shadow of God's approaching judgment. ***Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and He shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until He have destroyed thee*** (Deut. 28:47-48). Yet even through the dark clouds of the terrible storm that had gathered over Jerusalem, the Lord still sent rays of hope that foretold a brighter day. Jeremiah's announcements of the ruin awaiting Judah were terrifying, but God was not leaving His people without hope. Even before the storm, God was already letting the promise of the rainbow peak through the clouds to provide comfort and solace for all who sincerely believed in Him. ***Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper.***

Those listening in the time of Jeremiah did not understand the depth and breadth of the promise behind these words. No doubt, they took comfort in the belief that God would send them a mighty king that would restore their earthly kingdom, but there was an immense difference between this promised

King and all others who had ever sat on David's throne. While the faithful remnant looked longingly towards a time of earthly redemption, God was promising them (and us) the chance at eternal salvation!

THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS made His first appearance as prophesied, as a humble babe born in the small town of Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2). He came forth as a tender branch from a tree cut down. ***There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots*** (Is. 11:1). He is spoken of as **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS** because all righteousness has its source in Him; ***For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him*** (II Cor. 5:21). When we accept Him as our Savior and Lord, His life—His righteousness—flows into us. Therefore, we stand justified before God—not upon our own merits, but upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

I Jesus have sent Mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star (Rev. 22:16).

Thought for the Day: *God's plan is ever unfolding. Each stage benefits not only those alive to see it but also the countless generations not yet born.*

Christ Revealed: As **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS** (Jer. 23:5-6). ***Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*** (I Cor. 1:30; also II Cor. 5:21).

Word Studies: 23:10 **adulterers** = forsakers of God for the false gods; **because of swearing** = because of the curse of God upon it; 23:32 **lightness** = vain boasting; 25:34 **fall like a pleasant vessel** = break like a valuable vessel; 25:38 **covert** = hiding place.

Pray for Staff: Ryan McCrary • **Government Officials:** Rep. Kathy Castor (FL), Rep. Brad Schneider (IL), Sen. Steve Daines (MT) • **Country:** Angola (19,088,106) Southwestern Africa • **Major Languages:** Portuguese, Bantu, Other African Dialects • **Religious Freedom** • 47% Indigenous Beliefs; 38% Roman Catholic; 15% Protestant • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray not to be envious of others (Ps. 37:1).

Optional Reading: I John 2

I spake also to Zedekiah king of Judah according to all these words, saying, Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live. Why will ye die, thou and thy people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the LORD hath spoken against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon? Therefore hearken not unto the words of the prophets that speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: for they prophesy a lie unto you. For I have not sent them, saith the LORD, yet they prophesy a lie in my name; that I might drive you out, and that ye might perish, ye, and the prophets that prophesy unto you (Jer. 27:12-15).

Often, what God would have us do is not what we want to do. There are times when it might not even seem sensible, and other times when our fallible human reasoning will tell us it's the absolutely wrong action. Such would undoubtedly have been the case when Jeremiah brought God's proclamation to Zedekiah and the neighboring kingdoms' representatives gathered to discuss the growing Babylonian threat. ***I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him (Jer. 27:5-7).***

Yielding to Babylon was the last thing any of those men desired to do. They had come together to discuss alliance strategies, not surrender. All of their various 'holy' men were telling them the same thing, ***ye shall not serve the king of Babylon.*** Jeremiah's words flew in the face of what they believed reasonable and true. For Zedekiah, Jeremiah's proclamation was even more troubling. Why would God counsel him to do something that would ruin him professionally, socially, and financially? Had Zedekiah taken Jeremiah's message and examined it

in the light of God's recorded Word and prophetic record, the truth would have been revealed to him. Instead, he viewed it through the filter of the then-current worldly standards. In that light, Jeremiah's message fell far short of society's 'rational and reasonable' test. Zedekiah ignored it, choosing instead to believe Hananiah's much more palatable message. ***Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon*** (28:2).

Discerning the path God would have us take when faced with a complicated or troublesome situation is rarely easy. It gets even more challenging when we are being inundated on all sides by 'helpful Christian advice,' especially when not all advisors agree. Add in societal pressure, and the choices can become overwhelming. In those situations, we need to remember that it doesn't matter what we feel would be easiest to do, what our friends and family want us to do, or what the world says we should do. It only matters what God is telling us to do. If we examine our options through the filter of His Word and pray with an open heart, He will highlight the way.

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths (Prov. 3:5-6).

Thought for the Day: *God's Word is neither optimistic nor pessimistic; it is the truth, and He is the only one we can rely on to tell it.*

Christ Portrayed: By Jeremiah, who was falsely accused by the priests and the false prophets (Jer. 26:8-9). Our Lord was also threatened and falsely accused by the religious rulers of His day.

Word Studies: 26:14 **meet** = right; 27:19 **the sea** = the bronze laver at which the priests cleansed their hands and feet before entering the Temple; **residue** = remainder.

Pray for Government Officials: Sen Jon Tester (MT) • **Country:** Anguilla (16,086) Caribbean • Major Language: English • Religious Freedom • 83.1% Protestant; 5.7% Roman Catholic; 1.7% Other Christian; 5.2% Other; 4.3% None/Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Delight in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart (Ps. 37:4).

Optional Reading: I John 3.

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jer. 31:33-34).

When we think of the prophecies of Jeremiah, we most often think of messages of disobedience, suffering, and destruction, but today's reading takes a refreshingly different path. Chapters 30 and 31 provide us with one of the most complete revelations in the Old Testament of the reign of Christ and the nature of the New Covenant with His people.

The original hearers of the message that God had entrusted with Jeremiah had a limited understanding of the grace of God. They lived under the Covenant established on Mount Sinai, represented by external Law recorded on stone tablets. This Covenant expressed the holiness and righteousness of God: ***Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good*** (Rom. 7:12). It had been given so that God's chosen people could come to know Him, yet it existed separate of the body of believers. The people were instructed, ***And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates*** (Deut. 6:8-9). To know God, His people had to attend to His laws through an external motivator, a system of rewards and punishments meant to modify behaviors so that their hearts might be opened to God's truth.

Through the promise that God set forth via the prophecy of Jeremiah, the people were given their first glimpse at the much more intimate relationship with the Lord that was to come. ***I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people.*** What an incredible scene this verse invokes! Can you imagine living

in a world where everyone lived for God? Through the work of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit, we are already much closer to this reality than were the citizens of ancient Judah. For those of us that have accepted Christ as our Savior, ***the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God*** (Rom. 8:16). The Holy Spirit lives inside of us, supporting us as we work to rise above our baser human nature and seek to live in the will of God. ***For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace*** (6:14). Yet the day that Jeremiah was speaking of, the day that God will ***put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts***, the day that evil will be eradicated from God's creation, is still to come.

For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord (I Thess. 4:16-17).

Thought for the Day: *If we surrender our lives to God, no force can take us from Him.*

Christ Revealed: As the One who forgives sin (Jer. 31:34).

Word Studies: 29:11 **an expected end** = a hopeful future; 29:23 **have committed villany** = have done disgraceful things; 30:21 **engaged** = pledged; 31:14 **satiate** = fully satisfy; 31:21 **high heaps** = road signs (pointing back to Israel).

Pray for Country: Antigua and Barbuda (91,295) Eastern Caribbean • Major Languages: English, Local Dialects • Religious Freedom • 76.4% Protestant; 10.4% Roman Catholic; 5.4% Other Christian; 2% Other; 5.8% None/Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Rest in the Lord; wait patiently for Him (Ps. 37:7).

Optional Reading: I John 4

Moreover the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah the second time, while he was yet shut up in the court of the prison, saying, Thus saith the LORD the Maker thereof, the LORD that formed it, to establish it; the LORD is His name. Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not (Jer. 33:1-3).

Jeremiah was in dire straits. After branding him both a troublemaker and a false prophet, Zedekiah had locked him away to silence his warnings of their fast-approaching defeat. **For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, Wherefore dost thou prophesy, and say, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it (Jer. 32:3).** Jerusalem was under siege by the Babylonian army, and Jeremiah was stuck in prison, alone and helpless. Yet even behind bars, Jeremiah's dedication to God did not falter. He faithfully continued to share God's message with all who would listen, heedless of the dangers surrounding him.

While he was yet shut up in the court of the prison, the Lord approached Jeremiah with an astounding offer. **Thus saith the LORD the Maker thereof, the LORD that formed it, to establish it; the LORD is His name. Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.** Jeremiah had served God without question for years, contenting himself with the knowledge that he was working under God's will. Now, the Lord was offering to share His secrets with him, but there was a catch. If Jeremiah wanted to know, he had to ask. Why was asking important if God already knew the desires of Jeremiah's heart (Matt. 6:8)?

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God (Phil 4:6). God requires us to ask for our benefit, not for His own. By asking for what we need or want, we are acknowledging the One who is capable of giving it to us. It is possible to know that you are thirsty but not realize that if you turn the tap, you can have water. If someone always intervenes and brings you a full glass without you ever discovering where

the water comes from, you are left with a false impression of how your thirst can be quenched. God wants us to understand our needs, but He also wants us to realize He is the One that meets them.

If God always answered our prayers before they had time to form in our minds, we would never understand where our blessings come from. It is essential that we know to turn to Him in our times of need, even if we don't know what to ask of Him. Our prayers can be as simple or as detailed as we wish. A heartfelt "God help me" will catch His attention as quickly as an alphabetized list of our troubles and concerns. ***Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God*** (Rom. 8:26-27). All we have to do is reach out; God will do the rest.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you (Matt. 7:7).

Thought for the Day: *God is our master, not our equal or our servant. He deserves to be approached with reverence and respect.*

Christ Portrayed: By Jeremiah who, even though he was in prison, acted as a kinsman-redeemer by purchasing the land of his cousin Hanameel (Jer. 32:6-14; Lev. 25:25,49; Ruth 2:20; 3:12-13). Jesus is our Kinsman- Redeemer who purchased our freedom from sin, hell, and the grave with His own blood on Calvary (I Cor. 6:20; Gal. 4:4-5; Titus 2:13-14; Heb. 13:12; Rev. 1:18).

Word Studies: 32:4 **mouth to mouth** = face to face; 32:10 **evidence** = deed; 32:25 **for** (second usage) = even though; 32:44 **subscribe evidences** = sign deeds.

Pray for Staff: Jennifer Palafox • **Government Official:** Rep. Kim Schrier (WA), Rep. Scott Franklin (FL), Gov. Gretchen Whitmer (MI) • **Country:** Argentina (43,024,374) Southern South America • Major Languages: Spanish, Italian, English • Religious Freedom • 92% Roman Catholic; 2% Protestant; 2% Jewish; 4% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Sing praises to God, for He hears your prayers and delivers you (Ps. 40:1-3).

Optional Reading: I John 5

Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin (Jer. 36:2-3).

God instructed Jeremiah to write all the messages He had given him in one book. This was to be done in hopes that the people might read from this account, realize the error of their ways, turn to God, and repent. This also ensured that the record of all God had spoken through Jeremiah would be preserved. Why, if the spoken message had not brought the nation to repentance, did God believe that reading it in book form would do the trick? He didn't. God knew the nation of Judah would fall. Neither Jeremiah's testimony nor the written account was intended to change a nation but rather to sway the hearts of individual men. God had it recorded to allow His Word's power to continue to speak for itself long after the men who transcribed it were gone. ***The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, Thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever (Ps. 12:6-7).***

The Bible is not a mere "book" written by men. It is the supernaturally inspired Word of God. The words on its pages possess the greatest power the world will ever know. ***For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12).***

While God intended for the written Word to serve as a reminder to all who had heard it spoken, that was only the beginning of His intent. The Bible was written to be passed down from generation to generation so that all would have the opportunity to witness a first-hand account of the miraculous works done by God throughout the history of Israel and the

foundation of the church. God's Word was meant to change the lives of those to whom it was initially given, and it is intended to do the same for us today. We must dedicate ourselves to studying the Word of God and allow It to change us in the way God intended. ***Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth*** (II Tim. 2:15).

His Word is God's second greatest gift to His people, the first being His Son, Jesus Christ. Bible Pathway's mission for the last 50 years has been to get that Word into the hands of as many people as possible so that they might have the opportunity to read it for themselves and experience the joy of His living presence and the comfort of having their spiritual hunger fed. Please join us as we raise our voices in thanksgiving for all the souls God has enabled us to touch and bow our heads in prayer for all those we have yet to reach. Praise God! His Word is on the move.

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come (Matt. 24:14).

Thought for the Day: *His Word stands not only as a cornerstone for the faithful but also as a beacon to those who do not yet believe.*

Christ Revealed: As the One who desires forgiveness, repentance, and liberty for all who are in bondage (Jer. 36:3). Jesus said: ***The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised*** (Luke 4:18).

Word Studies: 34:5 **burnings** = ceremonial incense burning, to honor the dead (especially kings) at their funerals (II Chr. 16:14); 35:19 **not want** = never be without.

Pray for Staff: Kevin Jennings • **Government Officials:** Rep. Clay Higgins (LA), Sen. Todd Young (IN), Sen. Joe Manchin (WV) • **Country:** Armenia (3,060,631) Southwest Asia • **Major Languages:** Armenian, Kurdish • **Religious Freedom** • 92.6% Armenian Apostolic Church; 1% Evangelical; 2.4% Other; 1.1% None; 2.9% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Praise God for everything (Ps. 40:16).

Optional Reading: II John 1

Then said Jeremiah unto Zedekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel; If thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire; and thou shalt live, and thine house: But if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand (Jer. 38:17-18).

Zedekiah, son of godly Josiah, was the last Judean king to rule in Jerusalem. Despite his father's righteousness, Zedekiah soon proved to be a man whom neither feared nor honored the Lord. **Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the LORD** (II Chr. 36:11-12). Going against God's commands, Zedekiah sought an alliance with Egypt. This upset the delicate balance between the nominally independent state of Judah and the Babylonian empire (the Chaldeans) to which they paid tribute, causing Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, to order a siege on Jerusalem.

The heavily fortified city held out for nearly a year and a half, but the horrors of famine and pestilence had taken a heavy toll on her once proud inhabitants. Seeing that nothing was left, Zedekiah attempted to flee the city, despite having been repeatedly warned against that course of action by Jeremiah. **But the Chaldeans' army pursued after them, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho: and when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he gave judgment upon him. Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes: also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah. Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with chains, to carry him to Babylon** (Jer. 39:5-7). In this manner were the prophecies of God fulfilled (Ezek. 12:12-13).

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (II Pet. 1:19-21). God gave Zedekiah every opportunity to save himself and his family, but in the end, Zedekiah trusted only in the physical world. Zedekiah refused to believe the Word of God, and he paid for his disbelief with his dearest blood.

God's Word is immutable and inerrant, and it is all that stands between this world and the fiery pits of hell. It is within its pages that we can find the path of Christ and discover the gift of eternal life. If we choose to dismiss it and rely instead upon the 'wisdom' of mankind, then we can expect a fate even worse than Zedekiah's.

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools (Rom. 1:21-22).

Thought for the Day: *Those who choose to trust the word of the world over the Word of God will always have their trust betrayed.*

Christ Portrayed: By Jeremiah, who stood as a faithful witness to the revealed will of God (Jer. 38:2-9). ***Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness*** (testimony) ***against Jesus, to put Him to death*** (Matt. 26:59).

Word Studies: 37:16 **cabins** = cells; 38:4 **weakeneth the hands of** = discourages; 38:12 **cast clouts** = worn-out clothes; 38:19 **mock** = abuse; 39:18 **for a prey** = as a prize; 40:4 **forbear** = do what you prefer.

Pray for Staff: Ryan McCrary • **Government Officials:** Rep. Tim Burchett (TN), Rep. Paul Ruiz (CA) • **Country:** Aruba (110,663) Caribbean • Major Languages: Papiamentu, Spanish, English • Religious Freedom • 75.4% Roman Catholic; 4.9% Protestant; 1.7% Jehovah's Witness; 12% Other; 5.5% None; 0.5% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray to be considerate to the less fortunate (Ps. 41:1).

Optional Reading: III John 1

Now it came to pass in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, and the princes of the king, even ten men with him, came unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and there they did eat bread together in Mizpah. Then arose Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and the ten men that were with him, and smote Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan with the sword, and slew him, whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land. Ishmael also slew all the Jews that were with him, even with Gedaliah, at Mizpah, and the Chaldeans that were found there, and the men of war (Jer. 41:1-3).

With the fall of Jerusalem, the Babylonian conquest of Judah was complete. Many of her citizens had been captured or killed, but some had been left behind in a Babylonian-controlled Judah. **And as for the people that remained in the land of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had left, even over them he made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, ruler** (II Kings 25:22).

Gedaliah, a prominent Judean who had previously taken charge of Jeremiah upon his release from prison, had been appointed governor over the remnant left behind. **And Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan swore unto them and to their men, saying, Fear not to serve the Chaldeans: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you** (Jer. 40:9). Gedaliah's words echoed the warning God had issued through Jeremiah, **But the nations that bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him, those will I let remain still in their own land, saith the LORD; and they shall till it, and dwell therein** (27:11). Under his brief leadership, many of those who had fled before the Babylonian invasion returned home and began picking up the pieces of the lives they had left behind (40:12).

Ishmael, a descendant of the royal house of David (II Sam. 5:13-16), took exception to Gedaliah's appointment as governor and plotted against him with the Ammonites. Perhaps he was jealous that the other man held a position he felt rightly

belonged to the house of David, or maybe he was upset that Gedaliah was acquiescing to Babylonian rule. But whatever the reason, Ishmael came to Gedaliah in good faith, ate at his table, and then killed him, along with all his household and other guests. The slaughter did not stop there. Before his crime was discovered, Ishmael intercepted a group of eighty pilgrim worshipers. He killed all but ten, carelessly throwing their bodies into a pit, before ultimately escaping back to Ammon with eight of his men (41:15).

If Ishmael's brutal attack had been motivated by a desire to reclaim Judah from the Babylonians, it failed horribly. Driven by fear of a Babylonian reprisal over the massacre, the remaining Jews ignored God's repeated command to stay put (42:9-11) and fled to Egypt. As God had foretold, the land of promise was left devoid of the people of God.

And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind (Deut. 28:64-65).

Thought for the Day: *When we put our pride above His Word, we harm not only ourselves but also those around us.*

Christ Revealed: By ***My servants the prophets*** (Jer. 44:4).

Word Studies: 41:1 **seed royal** = royal family; 41:9 **pit** = cistern; 41:14 **cast about** = turned around; 42:18 **execration** = curse, object of disgust and shame; 42:20 **dissembled** = were deceitful; 43:3 **setteth thee on** = incites or influences you.

Pray for Country: Australia (22,507,617) Between the Indian and Pacific Oceans • Major Language: English • Religious Freedom • 28.8% Protestant; 25.3% Roman Catholic; 2.6% Eastern Orthodox; 4.4% Other Christian; 2.5% Buddhist; 2.2% Muslim; 1.3% Hindu; 8.5% Other; 2.2% Unspecified; 22.2% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray for a greater desire to serve the Lord (Ps. 42:1-2).

Optional Reading: Jude 1

But fear not thou, O My servant Jacob, and be not dismayed, O Israel: for, behold, I will save thee from afar off, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and be in rest and at ease, and none shall make him afraid. Fear thou not, O Jacob My servant, saith the LORD: for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished (Jer. 46:27-28).

And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is My son, even my firstborn (Ex. 4:22). Before drawing them out of the land of Egypt, God publicly acknowledged Israel as His child. Not simply His creation, His child. Tucked away as it is in the somewhat repetitive appearances of Moses before Pharaoh, the significance of this verse can be easily missed. From that moment on, then unto forever, Israel belonged to God — because God said so. ***For the LORD will not forsake His people for His great name's sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you His people (I Sam. 12:22).*** God does not take attacks on His children lightly. ***But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh (Matt. 18:6-7)!***

Chapter 46 of the Book of Jeremiah warns of the Lord's imminent judgment of Egypt. It tells of how the mighty, arrogant nation would be brought to her knees by the Babylonians, driven back, and permanently removed as a world power. ***Go up into Gilead, and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt: in vain shalt thou use many medicines; for thou shalt not be cured (Jer. 46:11).*** Egypt had by turns oppressed and tempted Israel to turn from God's path; therefore, His judgment of Egypt had no escape clause, no mercy to soften the blow. Both Egypt and Israel faced judgment, but only God's child would be redeemed.

When God claimed kinship with the nation of Israel, He wasn't elevating one human bloodline above all others; He was forming the basis for the body of Christ. Israel belonged to God, but not everyone born an Israelite belonged to God's Israel. ***Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel*** (Rom. 9:6). ***Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham*** (Gal. 3:7). ***For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus*** (Gal. 3:26). Members of the body of Christ now stand before God, recipients of His long-ago promise. ***Fear thou not...for I am with thee...I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure.*** Imperfect and unworthy though we are, we emerged on the right side of judgment the moment we surrendered all to Christ. For the rest of our earthly lives, God will direct, correct, and chastise us, remolding us in His image. In the end, He will bring us home. We are His children; by Him, we are redeemed.

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (II Cor. 6:17-18).

Thought for the Day: *God may allow the wicked to test us, but they are afforded no mercy by doing so.*

Christ Revealed: As the One who lovingly corrects His people (Jer. 46:28). ***Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth*** (disciplines), ***and scourgeth*** (whips) ***every son whom He receiveth*** (Heb. 12:6).

Word Studies: 46:4 **brigandines** = armor; 46:11 **daughter** = people; 48:2 **be cut down** = perish; 48:10 **deceitfully** = negligently; half-heartedly; 48:19 **espy** = watch; 48:41 **Kerioth is** = Cities are.

Pray for Staff: Gilbert Palafox • **Government Officials:** Gov. Kathy Hochul (NY), Rep. Mary Miller (IL) • **Country:** Austria (8,223,062) Central Europe • **Major Language:** German • **Religious Freedom** • 73.6% Catholic; 4.7% Protestant; 4.2% Muslim; 3.5% Other; 2% Unspecified; 12% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Remember that God delights in your joy (Ps. 43:4).

Optional Reading: Revelation 1

The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet against Elam in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will break the bow of Elam, the chief of their might. And upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them toward all those winds; and there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come. For I will cause Elam to be dismayed before their enemies, and before them that seek their life: and I will bring evil upon them, even my fierce anger, saith the LORD; and I will send the sword after them, till I have consumed them: And I will set my throne in Elam, and will destroy from thence the king and the princes, saith the LORD. But it shall come to pass in the latter days, that I will bring again the captivity of Elam, saith the LORD (Jer. 49:34-39).

Today's reading is especially satisfying for anyone who has ever complained, "But God, what about that other guy?" After 45 chapters of using Jeremiah to prepare His people to receive His judgment, God abruptly changed the subject. The fact that His people were being chastised for their rebellion and disobedience did not excuse the ill-treatment they had received at the hands of other nations. God might have used their neighbors' worldly, sinful natures to rebuke and mold Judah, but He never once disregarded those natures. Starting with Chapter 46 and continuing through Chapter 51, God had Jeremiah pronounce the fates of those proud and faithless nations.

Even more so than His warnings to the citizens of Judah, Jeremiah's words of condemnation regarding the pagan nations were not intended to modify their behavior in any way. No if/then warnings were issued, just verse after verse of simple, terrifying judgment. **Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will cause an alarm of war to be heard in Rabbah of the Ammonites; and it shall be a desolate heap, and her daughters shall be burned with fire: then shall Israel be heir unto them that were his heirs, saith the LORD (Jer. 49:2). But I have made Esau bare, I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself: his seed**

is spoiled, and his brethren, and his neighbours, and he is not (49:10). These nations had given themselves over to sin to such an extent that their hearts, eyes, and ears were completely closed to their Creator. They had taken malicious pleasure in tormenting God's people, often for the simple reason that they were God's people. The message God imparted through Jeremiah made it clear that was something the Lord would not tolerate. ***Concerning the Ammonites, thus saith the Lord; Hath Israel no sons? hath he no heir? why then doth their king inherit Gad, and his people dwell in his cities*** (49:1)?

God owes us no explanation for why He does what He does or the timeline in which He chooses to do it. It is especially not our business what He does concerning anyone else. But He has given us more than enough information in His Word for us to be confident that, no matter how unfair or unbalanced a situation may be in the present, God is handling it. Our suffering at the hands of others does not escape His notice, and it will not go unanswered forever.

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord (Rom. 12:19).

Thought for the Day: *No one escapes God's judgment; if you believe you have felt it sooner than those around you, take comfort in the chance to repent.*

Christ Revealed: As the **Redeemer** who pleads our cause (Jer. 50:34).

Word Studies: 49:1 **their king** = Ammonite god known as Malcham/Malcam, Milcom, Molech or Moloch, to whom children were sacrificed through fire; 50:5 **thitherward** = toward it; 50:31 **visit** = punish.

Pray for Government Official: Rep. Julia Brownley (CA) • **Country:** Azerbaijan (9,686,210) Southwestern Asia • **Major Language:** Azerbaijani • **Restricted Religious Freedom** • 93.4% Muslim; 2.5% Russian Orthodox; 2.3% Armenian Orthodox; 1.8% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Remember that the Lord is always ready to help you in times of trouble (Ps. 46:1).

Optional Reading: Revelation 2

So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon, even all these words that are written against Babylon. And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, and shalt see, and shalt read all these words; Then shalt thou say, O LORD, thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever. And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates: And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary. Thus far are the words of Jeremiah (Jer. 51:60-64).

God is not the author of evil, but He can and does use existing evil to further His plan. **The LORD hath made all things for Himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil** (Prov. 16:4). God knows all the choices that we will make in our lives before we even draw our first breath, but He still allows us to live to make them. He then weaves it all, the good and the bad, into the tapestry of His perfect plan. **And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose** (Rom. 8:28).

God used worldly Babylon as a tool in His judgment, chastisement, and discipline of His people, but He never turned a blind eye to her sins. **Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered** (Prov. 11:21). Although she prospered for a time, there was never any doubt that she, too, would face God's judgment. In today's reading, God used Jeremiah to deliver a warning to all those who dwelt in Babylon. **Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the LORD's vengeance; He will render unto her a recompence** (51:6)—an offer of grace before the unleashing of wrath.

God will always offer us a way through to Him. No matter our sins or our situation, God will never block our path and refuse to let us come to Him. Even when He knows His offer

will be rebuffed, He still makes it. His grace is always there for the taking, and His wrath never comes without warning. God's proclamation made it clear that the nation of Babylon was doomed. But through the words scribed by Jeremiah and the obedience of the quiet prince Seraiah (51:59), God provided the individuals living there enough information for them to make an informed choice.

Those who persist in evil will face judgment at a time of God's choosing. This corrupt world is doomed, just as was Babylon, but all those who heed God's warning and avail themselves of His grace will live.

But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men (II Pet. 3:7). And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea (Rev. 21:1). He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son (Rev. 21:7).

Thought for the Day: *Those that choose to perpetuate worldly beliefs will be devoured by those beliefs.*

Christ Revealed: As the Creator of the universe (Jer. 51:15). ***All things were created by Him, and for Him*** (Col. 1:16).

Word Studies: 51:2 **fanners** = strangers, destroyers; **fan** = scatter, disperse; 51:11 **device** = plan, purpose; 51:17 **brutish** = foolish; **founder** = metal caster; **graven image** = idol he has made; 51:25 **mountain** = power; 51:31 **at one end** = from end to end; 51:42 **The sea** = The flood waters of the Euphrates; 52:31 **lifted up the head of** = showed favor to.

Pray for Government Officials: Justice Neil McGill Gorsuch, Rep. Don Davis (NC) • **Country:** Bahamas (321,834) North Atlantic Ocean • **Major Language:** English • **Religious Freedom** • 69.9% Protestant; 12% Roman Catholic; 13% Other Christian; 0.6% Other; 1.9% None; 2.6% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** God wants to be exalted through you (Ps. 46:10).

Optional Reading: Revelation 3

How hath the LORD covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in His anger, and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not His footstool in the day of His anger! The LORD hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, and hath not pitied: He hath thrown down in His wrath the strong holds of the daughter of Judah; He hath brought them down to the ground: He hath polluted the kingdom and the princes thereof. He hath cut off in His fierce anger all the horn of Israel: He hath drawn back His right hand from before the enemy, and He burned against Jacob like a flaming fire, which devoureth round about (Lam. 2:1-3).

The subject of God's anger is almost taboo in today's world. Pastors shy away from the topic in their sermons, study groups reference it only in passing as a historical event from the Old Testament, and individuals witnessing for Christ are encouraged to keep their focus on the wondrous gift of salvation and the miracle of rebirth. We stress His unconditional love, mercy, and grace and extoll the limitless nature of His forgiveness. We conveniently forget that the Lord is more than our support and salvation; He is our Heavenly Father, the ultimate authority figure to whom we all answer. His unconditional love for us presents in many forms, one of which is righteous anger. **As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent** (Rev. 3:19).

The sorrow Jeremiah expresses in the Book of Lamentations on behalf of the nation of Judah is that of a guilty child who has acknowledged his wrongdoing only after punishment has already been administered. The grief expressed is raw and painful to witness, but it is necessary. The child (Judah) trembles in the face of its father's (God's) anger, yet deep down begins to understand that the punishment is just. **The LORD hath done that which He had devised; He hath fulfilled His word that He had commanded in the days of old: He hath thrown down, and hath not pitied: and He hath caused thine enemy to rejoice over thee, He hath set up the horn of thine adversaries** (Lam. 2:17).

Uncomfortable to contemplate or not, God's righteous anger and subsequent chastisements are necessary components of our spiritual growth and development. Right and wrong, good and evil, are concepts that only God is qualified to define, and it is His will that we live within the parameters of His definitions. As His children, we should be thankful that He loves us enough to get angry with us, even when the consequences are painful to endure. ***If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons*** (Heb. 12:7-8). Instead of getting upset and defensive the next time you feel the conviction of God as you are suffering the consequences of some rash action, try praising Him for coming after you and guiding you back to the right path.

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed (Heb. 12:11-13).

Thought for the Day: *God's wrath and anger are as pure as His love and mercy—perfect and justified.*

Christ Revealed: By Jeremiah's sorrow over the destruction of Jerusalem (Lam. 1:12-22). Jesus expressed His sorrow for Jerusalem's failure to come to Him before it fell (Matt. 23:37; Luke 13:34).

Word Studies: 1:3 **between the straits** = where there was no way out; 1:4 **solemn feasts** = appointed assemblies; 1:9 **came down wonderfully** = had a horrifying fall; 1:14 **wreathed** = joined, intertwined; 2:12 **their soul was poured out into** = they died in.

Pray for Government Officials: Rep. Mary Gay Scanlon (PA), Sen. Thom Tillis (NC), Rep. Juan Ciscomani (AZ) • **Country:** Bahrain (1,314,089) Mid East • Major Languages: Arabic, English • No evangelical work is permitted • 70.2% Muslim; 29.8% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Ask God for daily direction (Ps. 48:14).

Optional Reading: Revelation 4

Thou, O LORD, remainest for ever; Thy throne from generation to generation. Wherefore dost Thou forget us for ever, and forsake us so long time? Turn Thou us unto Thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old. But Thou hast utterly rejected us; Thou art very wroth against us (Lam. 5:19-22).

Verse after heart-rending verse, Jeremiah flooded the pages of God's Word with his anguished cries of abandonment and loss. ***I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of His wrath. He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light. Surely against me is He turned; He turneth His hand against me all the day*** (Lam. 3:1-3). Yet, even amid his pain and despair, Jeremiah never lost sight of the absolute truth of God. ***Thou, O LORD, remainest for ever; thy throne from generation to generation.*** Although he was so spiritually crushed that he could not draw comfort from it at the time, Jeremiah never once doubted God's absolute sovereignty over all His creation. Jeremiah had momentarily lost all hope (for himself and Israel as a whole), but his faith in God was not shaken.

It is easy for us to proclaim the Lord's sovereignty over all when we are standing in the sunshine, rejoicing in the beauty of the day He has made. ***And He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain*** (II Sam. 23:4). We have no problem proclaiming the perfect nature of His plan when we are being buoyed by His blessings and enjoying His bountiful gifts. ***For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end*** (Jer. 29:11). We are content in such times to expound upon God's perfect timing, how He is never early or late. ***But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*** (II Pet. 3:8).

Such proclamations are much harder for us to make when we find ourselves caught in the heart of a storm. When disaster after disaster befalls us (either natural or manmade). When

we either have lost or are in imminent danger of losing all that we hold precious and dear and know there is nothing we can do to change it. When we prematurely come face to face with our own mortality or the mortality of a loved one and realize that control is an illusion and that we have no power over life or death. In these times, we don't want to believe that God is truly in charge. We don't want to believe He is allowing this to happen to us. We comfort ourselves by saying that the devil is at work but that God will prevail in the end, willfully refusing to understand that the storm has a place in God's plan just as surely as the sunshine. This was something that Jeremiah never once doubted.

Jeremiah knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that God was directing his steps, even when they led him down a path that he was loath to walk. He accepted that God's plan was beyond his comprehension, and the seeds of new hope took root in that knowledge and acceptance.

It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him (Lam. 3:22-24).

Thought for the Day: *Suffering and heartache are not signs of failure in God's service; failure comes from embracing despair and purposefully distancing ourselves from Him.*

Christ Revealed: As the merciful **Savior** (Lam. 3:22). **Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life** (Jude 1:21).

Word Studies: 3:5 **builded against** = besieged; 3:9 **inclosed** = blocked; 3:14 **a derision** = a laughingstock; 3:15 **wormwood** = bitterness; 3:29 **putteth his mouth in the dust** = speaks humbly; 4:10 **sodden** = boiled.

Pray for Bible Pathway Printer: Pollock Printing, Nashville, TN • **Government Officials:** Rep. Mary Peltola (AK) • **Country:** Bangladesh (166,280,712) Southern Asia • Major Languages: Bangla, English • Present religious freedom may become limited • 89.5% Muslim; 9.6% Hindu; 0.9% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Praise the Lord; our God is the Mighty God (Ps. 50:1).

Optional Reading: Revelation 5

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