

# Jeremiah 11-15

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please turn to the book of Jeremiah. You're going to need a Bible. I'll be difficult to follow. If you haven't got a Bible, the stewards are at the back. They've got Bibles if you want one. And if you need water, there is water.

All right? And so if you feel you need to get up and get a bit of fresh air, I won't be put off by that at all. Even my elders won't be put off by them at all.

Jeremiah 11. And next week is 16 to 20 if you want to do your reading ahead, do your homework. Jeremiah 16 to 20. There is a reason why reality TV is unavoidable these days, and it's because it's compelling.

From the banalities of life in the Great British Bake Off to the hidden deception of the traitors to the hidden stories of heartbreak in Race Across the World.

If you make the mistake of starting to watch this stuff, it is hard to break away, isn't it, to the world of normality and good taste. And the reason for that is because we all love the inside track.

[ 1 : 08 ] You know the kind of thing, the explosive interview with the former Prime Minister, the revealing documentary on Channel 4, the hidden camera in the changing room.

there's always the draw, there's always the draw, isn't there, to get up close and personal, to see how things really are on the inside, to get the inside scoop. And that's exactly what we've got in chapter 11 to 15 of Jeremiah.

The key to working out what's going on in this part of Jeremiah's prophecy is to notice who's talking, who's speaking. It's very revealing. The Lord speaks often, telling Jeremiah what to say.

Jeremiah generally speaks, telling God what he feels about what he's been asked to say. And occasionally, the people speak. But their words are reported or anticipated by God and his prophet rather than spoken out loud.

That's basically it. And these chapters, 11 to 15, are basically an extended conversation between Jeremiah and God himself. So what are they talking about? Well, in these chapters, Jeremiah walks us through the way in which God has taught him, corrected him, and gently encouraged him and equipped him for his work of ministry.

[ 2 : 22 ] It's almost as if we have Jeremiah's apprenticeship played out before us. His prophetic ministry training program. And what is remarkable is the way in which Jeremiah opens himself up for you and I to walk with him.

Now, of course, we are not Jeremiah. On balance, it is unlikely that Ealing is going to be invaded by Iraq. Some of you might differ on that.

But there is something that's happening here that is deeply relevant to us. Because Jeremiah is a prototype of the suffering prophet who is to come.

There is going to be multiple points of contact, as we will see through what Jeremiah goes through as he suffers for and with the people and what the Lord Jesus will go through. There are places where Jeremiah's reaction to the fact of the sin of his people is picked up and it's fulfilled in Jesus, in his love and in his life and ultimately in his death and our place.

And then the New Testament makes very clear that the apostles pick up where Jesus leaves off. So Paul says things like this, I rejoice in my sufferings. Now for your sake, in my flesh, I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is the church.

[ 3 : 43 ] And then the apostles pass that commission onto us and we are called to follow the apostles who follow Christ who was anticipated by Jeremiah.

And in that, as we look at Jeremiah, we see this template of Jesus' ministry, the apostles' ministry, our ministry. And so let's follow this conversation with Jeremiah and God himself.

What does authentic church life look like? The conversation starts in chapter 11 and verses 1 to 17 where firstly, God urges Jeremiah speak God's words.

It's hardly surprising. But the Lord insists that Jeremiah's ministry must be shaped by, bounded by, controlled by, driven by the word of God. Jeremiah's role, according to God himself, is, chapter 11, verse 2, hear the words of this covenant.

Speak to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. This covenant is, it's an umbrella term to describe what God has said about his relationship with his people up until now.

[ 4 : 49 ] It's summed up and it's reflected in the words of Deuteronomy and they are quoted repeatedly in these chapters. 11, verse 3, you shall say to him, thus says the Lord, the God of Israel. He's quoting from Deuteronomy 27.

Cursed be the man who does not hear the words of this covenant that I commanded you, your fathers, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, listen to my voice and do all that I command you.

So shall you be my people and I'll be your God, that I may confirm the oath that I swore to your fathers to give them a land flowing with milk and honey as this day. Now it's important for us to realize for all the creativity of the prophets, for all the prophets' willingness to make dramatic symbolic actions, they are basically preachers of the word of God.

Their message draws together what God has said already in previous generations. And the fresh revelation that was given and expressed by them. So as Jeremiah answers, verse 5, so be it, Lord. He's committing himself and signing up to a word-shaped ministry. 11 verses 6 to 8, God rams it home. Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem.

[ 6 : 05 ] Hear the words of this covenant and do them. For I solemnly warned your fathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. Warning them persistently even to this day, saying, obey my voice. Yet they did not obey or incline their ear.

But everyone walked in the stubbornness of his evil heart. Therefore I brought them all the words, brought upon them all the words of this covenant which I commanded them to do, but they did not. Jeremiah's job is to keep calling people to repent, to turn and obey and to hear and obey.

To remind them that they are the people that God has chosen, they are the covenant people of God to whom he's spoken and that changes everything. This word of God must control their understanding and their lives and it must control Jeremiah's ministry.

Jeremiah is to be relentlessly word-driven even if no one else is. And at this point, God very tenderly makes Jeremiah aware of something that will be painful for him to hear but essential for him to know.

Not only will people refuse to listen to him, God's already said that multiple times, but they will plot against him. Look at verse 9. The Lord said to me, a conspiracy exists among the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

[ 7 : 21 ] They've turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers who refuse to hear my words. They've gone after other gods to serve them. So what does Jeremiah do now that there's a conspiracy against him?

He's to keep on saying the same thing. speaking God's words to them. Even though he knows that the only effect that those words will have is to harden them further.

It's one of the striking contributions of the prophets. Especially Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

They warn us often that the gospel word-shaped words that we speak, they have the opposite effect to what we long for.

You know that. That instead of those gospel words bringing repentance and life, they often harden people in their rebellion. So think of Isaiah 6, right at the start of Isaiah's ministry, where he sees the Lord, God says to him, Isaiah, go and say to this people, keep on hearing but do not understand. Keep on seeing but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people dull, their ears heavy, blind their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts. Which is what Jesus picks up on, doesn't it, when he's explaining his ministry?

[ 8 : 34 ] Or Ezekiel, God said, son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to nations of rebels who rebelled against me. They and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day.

Their descendants are impudent and stubborn. I send you to them and you will say to them, thus says the Lord God. And when they hear or refuse or hear for they are a rebellious house, they will know that a prophet has been among them.

And so Jeremiah is to go to the people to preach to them God's word knowing, chapter 11, verse 11, behold, I'm bringing disaster upon them that they cannot escape.

And though they cry to me, I will not listen to them. In fact, Jeremiah is even forbidden to pray for them. Verse 14, don't pray for this people or lift up a cry or prayer on their behalf for I will not listen. They will call to me in their time of trouble. The horrible truth dawning on Jeremiah is that his preaching is going to have no effect and the people will not listen. And yet he must keep speaking. [9:38] His ministry is to be relentlessly, unshakably, inflexibly word-centered. And there are some things in life which are non-negotiable.

And this is one of them. For the preacher, for the prophet, to preach God's word until our death, we can do nothing else. Ministry is speaking God's word.

For us as a church, it is not our message to muck around with. We need to burn it into our brains that all authentic ministry has to be unapologetically word-centered.

It's not that we set out to be welcoming and warm and then we slip in a little bit of Bible when no one's looking. but everything is centered on and drives towards and flows from God's word being cured and obeyed.

Because church life must be unflinchingly, unapologetically word-centered. Everything else can change pretty much but not this.

[10:49] Our ministry needs to be relentlessly word-centered. And if we don't understand that, nothing in the rest of this book will make any sense. So speak God's word. And then from 11, 18 to 12, 17, secondly, suffer the pain.

Suffer the pain. In the next section, it becomes a proper conversation between Jeremiah and the Lord and Jeremiah moans or laments, to use the technical term, and God responds.

And then Jeremiah whinges a bit more and God responds again. Now, why is this conversation recorded for us? So that we get the fact of having a ministry committed to God's word is going to mean having a deal with extended opposition.

It just goes with the territory. And we need to know that up front. So in chapter 11 and verse 18, Jeremiah says, okay, I've got the bit about being word-driven. I understand that.

But then you showed me their deeds and it was absolutely horrible. There's a manly gruff exterior to Jeremiah, but emotionally he's pretty vulnerable.

[12:00] It says, I was like a lamb led to the slaughter. I walked right into it. I did not know it was against me that they devised the schemes, saying, let us destroy the truth with its fruit. Let us cut off from the land of the living, that his name be remembered no more.

Jeremiah is just a little bit naive here. And I wonder whether you think this, and if we're kind with people and we're really welcoming and we spend enough time with them and we listen to them, in the end, we can win them over, can't we?

Wrong. It doesn't matter how nice we think we are. It doesn't matter how relationally intelligent we might think we are, how skilled we might think we are, if we are speaking God's word sooner or later, we will have to suffer the pain that comes from those who stand with God.

And for Jeremiah, this meant having to come to terms with the fact that the conspiracy we have in chapter 11, verse 9, actually started with the very people that he thought he could count on. People from his very hometown.

Look at verse, chapter 11, verse 21, therefore thus says the Lord concerning the men of Anathoth who seek your life and say, do not prophesy in the name of the Lord or you will die by our hand. Anathoth, if you remember, is Jeremiah's home village.

[13:16] He's one of our own. He's one of our own. He's one of our own. No, they don't sing that. There's something doubly painful about being rejected by your own people, isn't it?

If you're rejected by strangers, you can take some comfort in the fact, isn't it? So, you go and do open air ministry or beach missions in a town you don't know, it doesn't matter if people don't take you tracks or don't like you very much.

In your school, when people reject you, it's a different story, isn't it? It's no accident that in Luke's ministry, in Luke's gospel, Jesus' ministry begins precisely at this note, do you remember?

He goes to Nazareth. Luke 4, he rolled up the scroll and he gave it back to the attendant and he sat down and the eyes of all the synagogue were upon him and he says, today the scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth and they said, isn't this Joseph's son? And he said to them, doubtless you will quote me this proverb, physician, heal yourself.

[14:19] What we've heard you did in Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well. And he said, truly I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. When they heard these things in the synagogue, they were filled with wrath.

And they rose up and they drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill of which their town was built so they could throw him down the cliff. Like Jeremiah, like Jesus, we need to be ready to suffer external rejection.

There is a real cost to churches in speaking God's word and that external cost has an internal cost in effect.

Chapter 11, verse 20, Jeremiah prays for God to intervene and deal with his enemies. Verse 21 to 23, he assures him he will do it but that produces turmoil for Jeremiah.

Righteous are you, O Lord, when I complain to you. Yet I would plead my case before you. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive?

[15:21] You plant them and they take root. They grow and produce fruit. You are near in their mouth and far from their heart. How come you don't deal with these people, Jeremiah asks.

One of the pitfalls about caring so much about the work of the Lord Jesus Christ and his church is that we care so much about the Lord Jesus Christ and his church.

Longing for God to do something, to revive his church, to straighten people up, to give people a greater desire for holiness, a desire to see people come to new life in Christ.

And when you have those desires, it can easily spill over into kind of angst-ridden outpouring that you find in chapter 12, verse 3. But you, O Lord, know me. You see me.

You test my heart towards you. You know I'm speaking your words. Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter and set them apart for the day of slaughter. Jeremiah says to God, can you do something about this?

[16:28] Enough is enough. And God's response is priceless. If you've raced with men on foot and they've wearied you, how will you compete with horses?

And if in a safe land you are so trusting, what will you do in the thicket of the Jordan? God gently says to Jeremiah, what did you expect? To be involved in God's work, to speak God's word, is to suffer pain.

Yes, they've dealt treacherously with you. Yes, they are in full cry after you. And you thought it was going to be different because God says, do not believe them.

Though they speak friendly words to you, then God says, if I can put this reverently, how do you think I feel? To speak the words of God, to be involved in ministry, is to suffer, if I can put it like this, the pain of God.

Look at verse 7 of chapter 12. God says, look, I've forsaken my house. I've abandoned my heritage. I've given the beloved of my soul into the hands of our enemies.

[17:30] My heritage has become to me like a lion in the forest. See what the image is actually saying? My people have savaged me like a lion. She's lifted up her voice against me, therefore I hate her.

God says, many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard. They've trampled down my portion. They've made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. They've made it a desolation. Desolate. It mourns to me.

And yes, God will act in judgment against his people, verse 12, and against those who in the words of verse 14 touch the heritage that I've given my people Israel. But don't miss it.

It's quite remarkable. God is depicted, and we need to be really careful here, as suffering the pain for us. This is the God of the universe who of course is beyond all human passions.

And yet, this is the God who will become one of us in the Lord Jesus and suffer and die for us. And the simple logic is he suffered the pain and so will we if we are united with him.

[18:35] 1 Peter 2 says this is a gracious thing. When mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. for what credit is it if when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure.

But if you do good and suffer for it, you endure. This is a gracious thing in sight of God. For to this you've been called because Christ has suffered for you, leaving you an example that you might follow in his steps.

He committed no sin, neither was any deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten. But he continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself for our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

By his wounds you have been healed. Suffering, the pain, goes with the territory when our ministry is built on speaking God's word. It's unavoidable. As is thirdly, doing whatever it takes to get the message across.

Start of chapter 13, Jeremiah breaks into prose once more. And it's one of the best incidents in the whole book. There's not a lot of humor in Jeremiah and you've got to make the best of it when you find it.

[ 19 : 41 ] And so chapter 13, verse 1, Captain Underpants, I think, is mildly amusing. Thus says the Lord, go and buy a linen loincloth. Now Chris Wright, who's as weak as water on this passage, wants to say that it's a linen belt.

It's not a linen belt. It's underwear. And he's told, 13 verse 1, put it around your waist and do not dip it into water. Do not dip your underwear into water.

That distracted me for a while this week. And most of the commentators frustratingly make no comments on it, on this rather odd prohibition of dipping your pants in a bucket of cold water before you put them on.

It's hard to know why Jeremiah would want to do that. And one commentator, R.K. Harrison, says if they were dipped in water, they would become softer and more pliable. Matthew Henry thinks they would last longer without washing.

John Calvin said, and I paraphrase slightly, who cares? But for some reason, pre-washing is banned. And so Jeremiah buys his undies according to the word of the Lord, puts them around his waist, and now he's suitably attired.

[ 20 : 54 ] He goes to Babylon, and he now removes his now not-so-fresh undergarments and finds a hole under the rock, stuffs them in the hole, and then walks home again.

Chapter 13, verse 6, After many days, the Lord said to me, After many days, the Lord said to me, Arise, go to the Euphrates, and take from there the loincloth that I commanded to hide there.

So he walks back there, it's a long way, digs up the underwear, and shock after horror, after several months buried under a rock, his underpants are spoiled and good for nothing.

Now the point is not hard to work out, is it? At the purchase of brand new underwear, the double trip to Babylon is made clear. At the people of Judah, what are they like? They're like Jeremiah's rancid pants.

Verse 10, There's evil people who refuse to hear my words, stubbornly follow their own heart, and they've gone after other gods to serve them and worship them. They should be like this loincloth, which is good for nothing, dead right.

[ 22 : 03 ] For as the loincloth clings to the waste of man, so I made the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah cling to me, declares the Lord, that they may be for me a people, a name, a praise, a glory, but they would not listen.

That's the point. And the stuff about jars in 13, 12, 14 is exactly the same. He quotes the Judean proverb, every jar shall be filled with wine. And they say, We know, verse 13, then you shall say to them, Thus says the Lord, Behold, I will fill with drunkenness all the inhabitants of this land, the kings who sit on David's throne, the priests, the prophets, all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and I will dash them one against another, father's sons to gather to close the Lord.

I will not pity or spare or have compassion that I should not destroy them. It is then Jeremiah's role to do everything in his power to communicate this message to the people who don't want to listen.

13, 15, Give ear, don't be proud. The Lord has spoken, Give glory to the Lord your God before he brings darkness, before your feet tremble. On the twilight mountains while you look for light, he turns it into gloom, makes it deep darkness, but if you will not listen, my soul will weep in secret for your pride.

My eyes will weep bitterly and run down with tears because the Lord's flock has been taken captive. The verses that follow, in verse 13, Jeremiah's voice mingles with the voice of God himself as he warns everybody from king and queen, downwards, to take seriously the coming judgment in the strongest possible language.

[ 23 : 27 ] Verse 22, If you say in your heart, Why have these things come upon me? It is for the greatness of your iniquity that your skirts are lifted up and you suffer violence. Can the Ethiopian

change its skin?

Or the leper of spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil. You can try if you like. Verse 26, I myself will lift up your skirts over your face and your shame will be seen.

I've seen your abominations, your adulteries, your neighings, your lewd whorings on the hills of the field. You can feel the preacher here grasping for language, for the right words that will penetrate the thick skins and the deaf ears of God's people.

It's because he knows that this message matters and nothing matters more than getting this message to God's people. It's the mark of his ministry. It's the mark of Jesus' ministry.

Jesus would say, O Jerusalem, O Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it. How often I would have gathered your children together as a hen, gathers their brood under their wings and you were not willing.

[ 24 : 28 ] Can you feel the passion to get the message across? Speak God's word, suffer the pain, do whatever it takes, stick to the task. 14 verse 1 to 15, 9.

Chapter 14, verse 1 to 6, God describes the attending chaos in quite dispassionate language.

Jeremiah has to keep reminding them this is what is coming, the destruction of your land, whatever you think or do.

And in verse 7 to 9, God anticipates they'll eventually come to their senses, partially at least. And he says, though our iniquities testify against us, act, O Lord, for your name's sake, for our backslidings are many and we have sinned against you.

Verse 9, why should you be like a man confused, like a mighty warrior who cannot save? Come on. Yet you, O Lord, are in the midst of us. Don't leave us. When the people cry like this, what is Jeremiah to do?

He is to keep on speaking the words that God has given him. And of course, it will be costly. No doubt, Jeremiah would love to have been able to say, good news, everyone. God's changed his mind.

[ 25 : 32 ] Everyone's off the hook. But that option is never on the table if we're faithful. Verse 11, do not pray for the welfare of this people. Though they fast, I will not hear their cry.

Though false prophets will sugarcoat words. Verse 14, the prophets are prophesying in my name. I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds.

I will punish them. But you, verse 17, stick to your task. You shall say to them, this word, let my eyes run down with tears night and day. Let them not cease, for the virgin daughter of my people is shattered with a great wound, with a grievous blow.

And if he needs any further reminder that he should stay on message, he gets it in 15, 1 to 9. God takes Jeremiah's side and says, look, though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my heart should not turn towards this people.

Send them out of my sight. Let them go. And when they ask of you, where shall we go? You shall say to them, thus says the Lord, those who are for pestilence to pestilence, those who are for the sword to the sword, those who are for famine to famine, and those who are for captivity to captivity.

[ 26 : 41 ] Since the days of Manasseh when Jeremiah was just a kid, the die's been cast. It's over. And in a remarkable depiction, we read verse 6, you've rejected me, declares the Lord, you keep going backward.

So I've stretched out my hand against you and destroyed you. I am weary of relenting. It's over. Of course, as we talked about in Jeremiah 1, it's not to say that God is like us and that he's run out of patience.

He's a cranky parent who loses it. God doesn't have any of our limitations. But we also need to remember that God is not stripped of feelings. Our emotions are limited, broken, twisted versions of his, if I can put it like that.

His love for his people burns and yet he is utterly consistent in saying, I've decided now, Jeremiah, you must keep speaking. Judgment is coming. Which takes us to the last prerequisite for what does authentic ministry, authentic church life look like.

Speak God's word, suffer the pain, do whatever it takes, stick at the task, and lastly, and most difficultly, difficult, difficultly? I don't know. Prepare to be broken.

[ 27 : 50 ] 15, 10 to 21, it's impossible to read this middle section of Jeremiah that we're right in the middle of, which is punctuated by personal, heartfelt outpourings.

It's misleading. The Bible editors sometimes call it Jeremiah's confessions. gospel ministry exposes us to external opposition, but it always exposes us to great personal cost.

To throw yourself into church life is to open yourself to disillusionment, bitterness, resentment, self-pity, all of which Jeremiah goes through and he vulnerably shares with us in chapter 15 verses 10 to 21.

I think it's fair to say here in chapter 15 Jeremiah is showing the pressure. Verse 10, Woe is me, my mother, that you bore me, a man of strife, contention to the whole land.

I've not lent, nor have I borrowed, yet all of them curse me. God reassures him in verse 11, tells him that the message you preach, Jeremiah, I will come true. But in verse 15, Jeremiah plunges right into the depths again.

[ 29 : 02 ] Oh Lord, you know, remember me and visit me and take vengeance for me or my persecutors. In your forbearance, take me not away. Know that for your sake I bear reproach. And Jeremiah says, I know I'm going through all this, God, because for the sake of the gospel, but it's hard.

And I know in my head that this is the way to go. Verse 16, Your words were found and I at them and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart for I'm called by your name, O Lord God of hosts.

But sometimes it feels too hard. There's just too much sacrifice. It hurts too much. I did not sit in the company of revelers, nor did I rejoice. I sat alone because your hand was upon me for you filled me with indignation.

It just feels too much. It feels like God has sucked him in and spat him out. Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be ill? Will you be to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail?

Jeremiah offers us no reflection over whether this is right or wrong. He's just honest in what he said. And this is what it's like to be God's spokesman, to be smashed. It's what it's like some of the time being involved in gospel ministry, being involved in church life is costly.

[ 30 : 18 ] And to become a follower of the Lord Jesus is costly. Didn't Jesus call us to himself saying, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

And so what's God's response to all of this? Well, there's powerful, tender reassurance which this chapter finishes with. Therefore, thus says the Lord, if you return, I will restore you and you shall stand before me.

It's like Isaiah saying, in repentance and rest is your salvation. Keep running back to me. If you utter what is precious and not what is worthless, you shall be as my mouth. They shall turn to you but you shall not buckle in the face of opposition.

And God reiterates what he said in chapter one. You will be like a fortified wall of bronze and they will fight against you but they won't prevail over you. For I am with you to save you and deliver you declares the Lord.

I'll deliver you out of the hand of the wicked and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless. Speak God's word. Be prepared to suffer the pain of opposition. Do what it takes to get the message out.

[ 31 : 24 ] Stick to the task. Prepare to be broken. That is the ministry of Jeremiah. That is the ministry of Jesus. And that is the ministry of the apostles.

And that is the ministry to which the church of Jesus Christ is called. Now that we've been transformed by the gospel, now that we are in Christ and we've been brought to new life by his spirit, now we've been justified by faith, now we've been called sons and heirs, now that we've been equipped to serve Christ in the power of the spirit, we speak his words.

And this is what God calls us to do. And so as we've walked this evening through these difficult chapters of Jeremiah, may God burn the shape of church life and gospel-shaped ministry into our hearts and minds and make us to serve Christ by speaking his words and make that the blazing center of our church life.

And it may well be that you are sitting here, if you're still awake, thinking, I don't want this, it is too much, it's too hard. And I understand that, I really do.

I sympathize with that. And if that's you, I want you to do something tonight, I want you to tell the Lord that. I want you to speak to the Lord about it.

[ 32 : 46 ] I'd love it if you'd come and speak to me or speak to another Christian friend or one of the elders about that, because the alternative to not wanting this is in the end to face the judgment that Jeremiah warns you of.

The danger is we sit here and we think that there's some halfway house, but there is no halfway house. May God work in us so that we can say with Paul, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

For his sake, Paul says, I've suffered the loss of loads of things, but I count them all as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him. Not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.

That I may know him and the power of his resurrection and may share in his sufferings. Do you see the two are tied? Becoming like him in his death that by any means possible I may attend the resurrection of the dead.

So by grace through faith, let us be a church that speaks God's word and doesn't give up and preaches the gospel until our dying breath.

[ 33 : 58 ] Let's pray. Let's pray.