

Jeremiah 40-45

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[0:00] Turn your Bibles to Jeremiah, and this week it's 40 to 45. One more week, Jeremiah. Next week it's chapter 46 to 52.

So do your homework one more time, and God willing we'll finish Jeremiah next week. Jeremiah 40 to 45, if you'd like to get a church Bible, do get one of them at the back.

I don't know about you, but Jeremiah has taken me by surprise. It's been more draining, more demanding, more relentlessly exhausting and searching than I anticipated.

Because Jeremiah has come to terms with the judgment of God. Jeremiah has preached the judgment of God. He has held out hope beyond the judgment of God. And then as we saw last week, he calls people to a real and deep, lasting, transformative return to God in repentance and faith.

But he's not done yet. In chapter 40 to 45, he painfully and painstakingly walks you and I through the anatomy of sin. And it's not pleasant.

[1:06] The context of these chapters is staggering ingratitude, inexplicable foolishness, and unfathomable grace. Now, the exile has just happened, but incredibly, God is still concerned for this bedraggled remains of his people, hanging out in what is left in the city of Jerusalem.

The exile has just happened, but God has not washed his hands of his people, even though they are still resistant to him. And I don't know if you've noticed this, but ingratitude is really infuriating, isn't it?

If you're a parent, and particularly a parent of teenagers, ingratitude is really infuriating, isn't it? It's infuriating because ingratitude is wrong. And ingratitude is revealing because it shows all sorts of things of what is going on on the inside.

And that takes us to the ingratitude and the foolishness of these chapters. These chapters are all about sin, their sin, and our sin. Because, remember, when you read the Old Testament narratives, they are never just about them.

God's people always represent all of humanity, and they stuff up in real time before our very eyes. So this evening, prepare to have your heart exposed.

[2:30] The thread that holds these chapters together is six things about sin. First of all, chapter 46, sin, is surprisingly disarming.

And we need to get up to speed on what is happening in Judah after the storm. After Nebuchadnezzar's final dramatic invention, he's brought about the end of Judah as we know it. And what happens is really unexpected. God speaks. And that in itself is quite dramatic. He doesn't leave them to work things out themselves. He speaks through a highly unusual source.

40 verse 1. The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord after Nebuchadnezzar. The captain of the guard had let him go from Ramah. When he took him bound in chains, along with all the captives of Jerusalem and Judah, who were being exiled to Babylon.

The captain of the guard, Jeremiah, took Jeremiah and said to him. Look at those two verses. It's interesting and easy to miss. Where is the word from God? The word of God to Jeremiah is actually what follows.

[3:33] It comes through Nebuchadnezzar, the captain of the guard. This message from God through Nebuchadnezzar to Jeremiah and from all the people is written down in verse 3.

Because you sinned against the Lord and you did not obey his voice, this thing has come upon you. And then now for Jeremiah. Now behold, I release you today from the chains of your hands. If it seems good to you to come with me to Babylon, come.

And I'll look after you. But if it seems wrong to you to come with me to Babylon, do not come. See, the whole land is before you. It's all completely gutted, but it's all before you. Go wherever you think

is good.

And right to go. If you remain and then return to Gedaliah, the son of Hiakim, son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon appointed governor of the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people. Or go wherever you think it's right to go.

Here's your choice, Jeremiah. Your work is done. Come to comfortable Babylon, or you can stick with the stubborn people. And be some help to the godly Gedaliah.

[4:36] The one appointed by Nebuchadnezzar to the unenviable task of trying to govern the rabble that's left. And what is it that Jeremiah decides to do? The captain of the guard gave him an allowance of food and a present and let him go.

It's the first present Jeremiah has got in the whole book. And then Jeremiah went to Gedaliah, lived with him, among the people who were left in the land. I find it really moving that Jeremiah stuck with this disobedient people.

With this disobedient remnant he's been preaching to all these years. They may be a godless, stubborn, rebellious people, but they are his godless, stubborn, rebellious people. Jeremiah says, no, I'm not going to go to Babylon.

I'm going to stick with the people who so resolutely refuse to listen to a word I've said over the years. However, the main concern of the text is this Gedaliah who gets the job of looking after the dregs of Judean society.

Who are of no political or economic use to Nebuchadnezzar. And so he therefore left them alone. But then a bunch of militia captains turn up at Gedaliah's door.

[5:47] And his gracious response is given in chapter 40, verse 9. Do not be afraid to serve the Chaldeans. Dwell in the land and serve the king of Babylon and it should be well with you. As for me, I will dwell in mispa to represent you before the Chaldeans who will come to us.

But as for you, gather wine and summer fruits and oil and store them in your vessels and dwell in your cities that you've taken. Incredibly, life under Gedaliah is going to be okay. The flow of blessing from God has not completely dried up.

Except for one small problem. We read about it in verse 13. Now, Johanan, son of Correa, and all the leaders of the forces in the open country came to Gedaliah and said to him, Do you know that Baal, the king of the Ammonites, has sent Ishmael, the son of Nathaniah, who is embittered, an embittered member of the royal family, to take your life?

But Gedaliah, the son of Achaikim, would not believe him. Now, Johanan, the son of Correa, spoke secretly to Gedaliah, Please, let me go and strike down Ishmael. No one will know it. Why should he take your life?

But Gedaliah, the son of Achaikim, said to Johanan, the son of Correa, You shall not do this thing, for you are speaking falsely of Ishmael. Gedaliah is warned of an assassination plot, but he says, Ishmael's such a lovely guy.

[7:03] I'm sure he doesn't mean any harm. But according to chapter 41 and verse 1 to 3, he did, and Gedaliah pays for his misjudgment. Ishmael, the son of Nathaniah, and the ten men with him, rose up and struck down Gedaliah with the sword and killed him, whom the king of Babylon had appointed governor in the land.

While he was there, Ishmael also struck down all the Judeans and the Chaldean soldiers who happened to be there. It's really tragic. But we shouldn't really be that surprised. Because sin has a way of being surprisingly disarming.

From our skewed and limited perspective, sin often looks, doesn't it, attractive and trustworthy, like Ishmael, the son of Nathaniah. While we live in these bodies and these minds, we need to be on our guard.

As the Bible urges us from beginning to end, that sin crouches at the door. We even need to take our immensely wise and godly opinions with a pinch of salt.

And it's why we cannot afford to be naive. Naivety is a disastrous quality in the service of the Lord Jesus. Do you know that? Sometimes people act as if being naive is profoundly godly.

[8:21] Sometimes we don't want to think ill of anyone ever. And that is not godly. It is stupid. And Gedaliah was stupidly naive. Naivety is not the same thing as godliness.

Naivety is at root a failure to take seriously both our own sin and the sin of other people. Naivety works on this principle. I'm nice. And you're nice.

And everyone is nice. And it will all work out nicely in the end. The problem with that is what? I'm not. You're not. And the situation is nice.

And I think it would be good for us to take this on board as a church tonight. It would save ourselves an awful lot of pain. Church leaders are often incredibly naive.

And so disastrous consequences have happened because church leaders have been naive about people. Godliness is not naivety. Sin is disarming.

[9:29] The stance of godliness is to remember that sin is my default setting. And I need to constantly question my judgment and examine my motives.

And believe it or not, sin is your default setting too. Now, of course, we're not all as evil as we could be. The world is not as evil as it could be all the time in every place.

But we never escape the down drag of sin. We never stop being capable of hypocrisy and self-deceit and self-interest and all kinds of sin. We need a godly realism, not naivety.

And so do you find being naive attractive? When we think of ourselves, do we think of ourselves instinctively as nice people, trustworthy people, who more often than not do the right thing out of godly motives?

People who might be slightly misunderstood. When we get it wrong, people say, I don't know where that came from.

[10:32] I don't know why I said that. We know exactly why I said it. We know exactly where it came from. And if we are naive tonight, I would want to suggest to you now is a great time to revise that opinion before you or I do more harm and more damage.

When we see other people, do we see them broken by sin and in need of the grace of God and mercy from us? Don't be fooled. Sin can be very disarming.

But let's not be naive. Because sin can also be, it's also brutally callous. That's the second thing. We see that flowing from chapter 41 and verse 4. This chapter starts with the murder of Gedaliah and his friends, and it goes swiftly downhill from there.

On the day after the murder of Gedaliah, before anyone knew of it, 80 men arrived from Shechem, Shiloh and Samaria. Their beards shaved, their clothes torn, their bodies gashed, bringing grain offerings and incense to present at the temple of the Lord.

And Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, comes out from Mizpah to meet them, weeping as he came.

And he met them. He said to them, come in to Gedaliah, the son of Ahicham. And they slaughtered them and cast them into a cistern.

[11:40] But there were ten men among them who said to Ishmael, don't put us to death. So he refrained and did not put them to death with their companions. Now the cistern which Ishmael had thrown the men was the large cistern that King Asa had made for the defence against Bashir, king of Israel.

And Ishmael fills it with bodies. The apocalypse that was the Babylonian invasion has come and gone, but what's left is a scene from a kind of war film, isn't it?

Ishmael goes on a killing spree. But notice it is all about self-interest and personal gain. The only thing that stops him killing the people is their relative wealth. Now he in turn is stopped by Jahannan, the son of Korea, but the damage is done.

God may have held out mercy to the people. Even those who disobediently refused to submit to King Ibu Kinesa. But they respond like this. As law and order collapses, people show their true colours.

And sin at the end of the day is brutally callous. Because sin insists that I am number one, and that ultimately I am God.

[12:48] The most important person in the universe is me, and you get in my way at your peril. You see, sin may be disarming on the surface, but underneath it stinks. Sin often looks disarming, but ultimately there is nothing respectful or tolerant about sin.

It is brutally callous, but it's also willfully defiant. Which you see from chapter 42, verse 1. Those who remain in Judah are rapidly descending into chaos.

Most of the ruling council is dead. The guy who's now in charge, Jahannan, is skulking around Bethlehem with a few people hoping to make a break for Egypt. And everything is falling apart. And you think, okay, surely God's people are going to have the sense to cry out to him and ask for mercy and do what he tells them.

Well, for once, in Jeremiah, at the start of chapter 42, things, just for a moment, are starting to look good. Someone says, shouldn't we pray?

Jahannan agrees. So it's worth a try. He goes to look for Jeremiah, chapter 42, verse 2. Let our plea for mercy come before you, and pray to the Lord your God for us for all this remnant, because we are left with but a few as your eyes see us.

[13:55] That the Lord your God may show us the way we should go and the thing that we should do. They realize that they've lost touch with the living God. They realize the covenant is unraveling before their eyes.

God's project to fill the whole universe with his people has gone into reverse. The exodus has gone into reverse. They're about to run back to Egypt. And they are desperate, verse 5.

They commit, don't they, to obedience up front. May the Lord be a true and faithful witness against us, if we do not act according to all the word with which the Lord your God sends you to us.

Whether it's good or bad, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God, to whom we are sending you.

That it may be well with us when we obey the voice of the Lord our God. On two previous occasions, in Exodus 24 and Joshua 24, they've prayed like this.

But it didn't turn out well. In fact, Jeremiah takes 10 days to get back to them. Chapter 42 and verse 7 is slightly ominous.

[14:51] God tends not to keep really desperate people waiting that long. And the message of Jeremiah is remarkably kind of Jeremiah-esque.

Look at verse 10. Or in verse 16, If you go to Egypt, and going to Egypt is never a good idea in the Bible.

If you set your faces to end Egypt, and go and live there, then the sword that you fear shall overtake you. The famine of which you are afraid shall close after you, and there you shall die.

All the men who set their faces to go to Egypt to live there shall die by the sword, famine, pestilence. They shall have no remnant or survivor from the disaster, and I will bring it upon them.

God is quite clear what they're supposed to do. You are supposed to stay.

And the Lord has said to you, O remnant of Judah, do not go to Egypt. It is not subtle. But just for a change, Jeremiah knows that people won't actually listen.

[15:59] Verse 22, Therefore know for certainty that you shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence, in the place where you desire to go to live. Sin is willfully defiant. That's brought up painfully in chapter 43.

The people say to Jeremiah, You're telling a lie. The Lord our God, Do you notice the switch? Initially, they ask the Lord your God, but now in chapter 43, the language switches to the Lord our God.

And he didn't say, Don't go to Egypt. So we are going to go. Verse 7, They go. God says one thing. They do the opposite. But isn't that always the nature of sin? I wish it wasn't always so.

But sin is willfully defiant. It is putting our hand in God's face and saying, No. It was Martin Luther who pointed out that you can't really break commandments 2 to 10 without breaking commandment 1.

Without deciding that you will not honour God as the Lord of the universe. We don't simply sin because we're flawed and cracked and broken and can't quite manage to get it right all the time.

[17:09] We don't sin because we are imperfect, though we are. We sin because we have willfully decided to go our own way, not God's. Now I know you know that, but do we actually get it and live it?

What about those times when we are exposed as having sin? And let's face it, that happens to all of us. When just occasionally the mask slips and other people see our sin, at that point what do we do?

Is our first reaction to explain our actions? Explain away them? Or to say, I didn't mean to say that, or I didn't mean to do that?

To insist events have conspired against us? To make me look worse than it actually was? It wasn't my intention to say what I actually said? Or do we operate on the fact that beneath all our sin is willful defiance?

And perhaps the reason that we find it so hard to get to that point is what Jeremiah exposes next.

That is that sin is relentlessly arrogant. Chapter 43, verse 8 to 44, 10.

[18:22] I think it's remarkable that Jeremiah went with his people to Egypt. Even when they said, God has told us to stay, we are off, still he goes. He's probably strongly encouraged to go at that point, but he does go and stay.

And what does he do? But we get to Egypt. And Jeremiah continues to do what he's always done, and he tells them what God is saying, and he announces what God is going to do next with the help of some large stones.

Chapter 43, verse 9. Take in your hands, large stones, and hide them in the mortar, in the pavement that is at the entrance to Pharaoh's palace into Haptopatapones.

I do wonder how he managed to hide large stones in the palace. I expect there were kind of these rather large lumps under the mortar to remind them of this. And this is what it is to remind them of. Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will set his throne above the stones that I've hidden, and he will spread his royal canopy over them, and he shall come and strike the land of Egypt.

[19:24] Verse 13, he shall break the obelisks of Heliopolis, which is in the land of Egypt and the temples of the gods of Egypt. He shall burn with fire, which is exactly what Nebuchadnezzar did in 576 BC.

Not that the Judean refugees play the blindest bit of notice to that. You would think that by now they would know that there is no escape from the living word of God. Even though they've seen their own city smashed and burning, they still refuse to listen.

Why? Because they're arrogant. Chapter 44, verse 4, God says, I persistently sent you all my servants, the prophets, saying, oh, do not do this abomination that I hate, but you did not listen.

Verse 7, he pleads with them. Why do you commit this great evil against yourself? Verse 8, why?

Why do you provoke me to anger with the works of your hands? Verse 9, have you forgotten the evil of your fathers? And verse 10, they have not humbled themselves even to this day, nor have they feared nor walked in my law and my statutes that I set before you and before your fathers.

God's people are relentlessly arrogant because sin is relentlessly arrogant. And if you are a human being, then you should probably be willing to battle against arrogance for the rest of your life.

[20:36] When we were growing up, my father, when we were teenagers, and he would tell us off, and my father would, he had these kind of stock phrases like all dads do, is that I'm getting sick and tired of being sick and tired.

And if you looked at him, he'd say you're being arrogant, and if you looked down, he'd say you were being insolent. So you didn't know where to look. But that is the people of God, both arrogant and insolent.

And God is sick and tired of being sick and tired. There's arrogance, isn't there? The kind of bombastic, out loud arrogance that announces to the world, I'm here, I'm in the room, take notice of me, I know best about everything.

Sin is relentlessly arrogant, but the way of Christ is humility. And you might be thinking, well, I'm not that kind of person that goes into a room and everyone's got to look at, but we need to remember there is an arrogance, isn't there, where the person sits back and quietly judges the loud mouth, dismisses them as being spiritually immature or brash, while quietly wishing that all the people in the world were a little bit more like me.

You see, when it comes to arrogance, we all get to join the club. Arrogance, or pride, if you prefer, is the original human sin.

[21:51] It's our default, and we need to know that and be prepared and be willing to fight it for the rest of our lives. Which brings us to number five, and that is 44 verses 11 to 30.

Sin is highly addictive. After more words of warning and warning of punishment from Jeremiah, chapter 44, verses 11 to 13, the people respond, and it really isn't pretty.

I think it's the worst excuse for the exile in the whole of the Bible. Verse 15, That isn't exactly how one and two kings relates the events.

Verse 18, Since we left off making offerings to the Queen of Heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, we've lacked everything. We've been consumed by the sword of famine, and the women said, When we made offerings to the Queen of Heaven and poured out drink offerings to her, was it without our husband's approval that we made cakes for her?

It's our fault, they said. This bedraggled bunch of idol worshippers, we caused the exile because we stopped worshipping the Queen of Heaven. It's really hard to know where to start.

[23:16] After all that God has done through Jeremiah, after all that he's said, what's their response? It's our fault because we weren't good enough idolaters. How can they come up with such a ridiculous explanation of their own failure?

And it's because sin has blinded them. And it's because sin is highly addictive. They've been locked into idolatry for so long that it's gripped their hearts and their minds.

And eventually God says, Enough! Verse 22, what actually happened, the Lord could no longer obey your evil deeds and the abominations you committed. Verse 23, it's because you made offerings and because you sinned against the Lord and didn't obey the voice of the Lord or walk in his laws and his statutes and his testimony that this disaster has happened.

Didn't make any difference. Sin in general, and idolatry in particular is highly addictive. Once you start, it's very difficult to stop.

The psychology of addiction is very complex. But one thing is that it's universally acknowledged is that the search for satisfaction suffers from the law of diminishing returns.

[24:24] So you know this, don't you? Children sin once and you get a thrill. So you go back for more. Sin five times and the high is a little bit lower. So you push a little bit further. Sin is highly addictive and that is what makes sin so deeply dangerous.

You love money, you want more money, you feel you deserve more money, you'll desperately want more money and you'll never have enough. You feel you deserve it and it will get hold of you and in the end you'll be living for it.

And when you don't get it, you'll be absolutely devastated. Sin once, you get a thrill. Sin five times, the thrill is less so you've got to go further and further and further. And that's why the New Testament tells us run from sin as fast as you can.

The problem for the remnant in Judah is that they are so locked into sinful ways of thinking and acting that Jeremiah's words are no longer having any effect on them. And so God says the chilling words verse 25, Our union wives have declared with your mouths and fulfilled with your hands.

We'll surely perform our vows that we've made to make offerings to the Queen of Heaven and pour out drink offerings to her. Well, do it. Confirm your vows, perform your vows.

[25:44] Verse 27, Behold, I'm watching over them picking up on Jeremiah 1. I'm watching over them for disaster and not for good. And I should tell you that these are the last words that Jeremiah says in the book.

We say goodbye to him tonight. It's the last time we hear of him. We look at the oracles against the nations next week, but it's striking that in this book, which probably contains more autobiography than any other book in the Old Testament, Jeremiah just slips off the stage with barely a murmur, quietly continuing to speak faithfully, as he's done for years.

And Jeremiah wants to end, Jeremiah ends inconclusively. We want a happier ending, but we don't get it. The last scene of Jeremiah's life shows him, as he spent most of his life, preaching God's word to a contemptuous people that won't listen.

He's in Egypt, the place he doesn't want to be, with the people who treat him badly, and he continues determinedly, faithfully, magnificently, courageously, heartlessly rejected.

A towering life, terrifically lived. But even in his last life, his last act, the spotlight remains firmly focused, not on the prophet, but on the deeply sinful people whom he preached.

[26:59] Sin is disarming. Sin is brutal, and defiant, and arrogant, and addictive. And it is also compellingly alluring, which takes us to the few verses of chapter 45, before we finish.

I hope that as we've worked through Jeremiah, you've caught something of the art history of the book, and either Jeremiah or Baruch or a combination of them both have fashioned a clear message from the ups and downs in Judah and Egypt after the hammer fell.

And nowhere is this more obvious than in this short instance, which unexpectedly interrupts the story in chapter 45. After God's word through Nebuchadnezzar ran into Jeremiah and God's word through Jeremiah to those who fled to Egypt, we get God's word through Jeremiah to none other than his sidekick, his PA, his scribe.

Suddenly, we're back at 605 BC, back when Nebuchadnezzar has become too big, has become the top dog, and Jehoiakim is tearing strips off God's prophet and God's word.

And here's what God says this to. That says the Lord, the God of Israel, to you, or Baruch, you said, woe is me, for the Lord has added sorrow to my pain. I'm weary with my groaning and I find no rest.

[28:13] Baruch is whinging. Life hasn't turned out as he thought. And the marvellous thing is God knows he's having a whinge and he tells him about it and there's something deeply comforting, I think, the fact that God gets us tonight.

But that's not the main point. God delicately and gently tells Baruch, get things in perspective. Thus you shall say to him, Jeremiah, thus says the Lord, behold, what I've built I am breaking down and what I've planted I'm plucking up.

That is the whole land. Do you have any idea what's going on here? He says to Baruch, can you even begin to appreciate my covenantal pain? That I've been committed to these people for a thousand years and not only did I create this world, I formed these people from one man, Abraham, and I've stuck with him through thick and thin and now I've had to dismantle my people for their own good and you say that you're having a bad day, Baruch?

The problem is Baruch has slipped into the temptation, isn't it, of making life all about him. Can you imagine how confronting this was for Baruch? For him to hear those words from Jeremiah and then to have to write them down?

And then this remarkable verse, verse 5, And do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not. For behold, I'm bringing disaster upon all flesh, declares the Lord.

[29:36] And God is going to act in judgment against everyone and everything that opposes him. And you are feeling sorry for yourself, Baruch? Really? And then a minor word to someone who isn't even a minor prophet, but I will give you your life as a prize of war in all places to which you will go.

Like the giant Sudanese eunuch last week we met, Baruch gets a personal guarantee of safety from our God, even though he'd been sucked into thinking he was the real deal. God is so extraordinarily and imaginably tender that even when his servants like you and I think we're oh so important, more important than we actually are, he's tender.

What are we to do with all this? These chapters make it clear that sin is alluring, disarming, defiant, brutal, addictive, arrogant. And if you hear this word from God tonight, it's terribly confronting, isn't it?

Because it impresses on us the truth about ourselves and about life, but ultimately about the Lord Jesus. These chapters bring us the truth of the reality of my sin, of how it sucks me in and pulls the wool over my eyes and deceives me.

And why we are so quick to say I didn't mean to or you don't understand or I was trying to do the right thing. And we are so eager and we preserve our reputations to think the best of ourselves.

[31:11] That's why at times it suits us to assume the best about others, to be naive. It's because we haven't actually come to terms with our susceptibility and our proneness and the vileness of our sin.

And I would go as far to say if we don't get this, then we cannot live a life which is saturated with the gospel. Our actions and our reactions will be seriously skewed because we do not see ourselves straight and we don't see others straight.

These chapters tell us something about life. They prepare us for what we are to expect as we live for Jesus. In that passage in Romans 7, Paul lays out how hard it is for us, even those of us who are in Christ, to negotiate life.

As those who are still sinful in a sinful world, let me read to you from Romans 7. For I do not understand my own actions. I don't do what I want to do, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law that is good.

So now it's no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me. That is in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want to do.

[32:34] I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. By which I think he means our faculties and our flesh are still infected with sin.

So I find it to be a law, an unbreakable rule, that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. The logic of Romans 7 is that even when we're in Christ, Romans 6, even when we are Christians, we are constantly duped, cajoled and strong-armed by sin into acting as if we are on our own, as if Christ did not come, as if the Spirit did not live within us.

And if we fight on those terms, we will lose. We will constantly be beaten down and beaten up by sin. And it would be totally miserable if it wasn't for the stunning victory won for us by Jesus Christ.

And these chapters give us more reason than ever to gasp at the scope of what God has done for us in Christ and on the cross. Because you do realize, don't you, that these chapters in Jeremiah, they're speaking about you and I.

God chose Israel to be a visual aid for all humanity, to represent all humanity. Their arrogance is my arrogance. Their callousness is my callousness. Their brutality is my brutality.

[33:50] Their defiance is our defiance. Their love for sin is our love for sin. And this is what took the Lord Jesus to the cross. It was my sin that held him there until it was accomplished.

Why has God given us this massive book? Why does he drag us through 52 chapters of Jeremiah so that we get what God has done for us in the Lord Jesus? Because it's only when we are aware of our sin and the wrath that it deserves, it is only when we realize how messed up we are and how, and our world is, that we start to truly cherish the grace that God has shown us in the Lord Jesus. William Law writes, we may justly condemn ourselves as the greatest sinners we know because we know, don't we, more of the folly of our own heart than we do of other people's.

So admit tonight that you are the worst sinner that you know. Admit that you are unworthy and deserve to be condemned, but do not stop that. The table will not let us stop that tonight.

Move on to rejoicing in the Saviour who came to save the worst of sinners. Lay down the luggage of condemnation and kneel down at the feet of him who bore your sin and cry tears of amazement with Paul.

[35:17] That I was shown mercy that in me the worst of sinners Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience. As an example, for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

Let's pray. Amen.