

Introduction: Something in all of us tries to bring God down to our level, rather than let Him bring us up to His level. When we look around, we see selfishness, greed and people using others to get what they want. The contrast between what we see, and a holy, all-powerful God who gave us all He is so we can live IN His generous LOVE now, is too much. One more thing about people: We do all we can to avoid pain. *** But THE God, who knows everything, knows that in order to change us for our own good, He must first break us down in order to build us up. Then we can live our lives His way, able to do good, as He does good. *** Today's passages taken together teach us to be thankful for the strong actions God takes to break us in order to fix us; and, they warn us we must let Him change us, or we will be driven from His Presence. *** Just before the last of Israel's descendents were driven out of the land God spoke of for Abraham's descendents, He called and commissioned Jeremiah to speak strong words in order to bring His people to repentance, so He could change them. They needed to repent of their desire to deceive themselves into believing they could reject God's ways and still be blessed by Him. *** Six hundred years later, God's people still had not changed. When Jesus entered God's house, He took strong actions against the greed of the merchants and moneychangers. He condemned them for turning a place where people could commune with God in right relationship with Him, into a cave of robbers. *** Let's approach these strong words with humility.

I. Yahweh's word to Jeremiah: I have known you and you are to break down and build up; tell all to do good to live here, and do not make My house a cave of robbers. (Jeremiah 1:4-10; 7:1-11)

A. Yahweh's word to Jeremiah: I knew you before you were born, and you are over all nations to break down and build up. (Jeremiah 1:4-10)

1. Then the Word of Yahweh was to Jeremiah to say: Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you came out I consecrated you a prophet, to the nations I had given you. (Verses 4-5)

Word was: From time-to-time God's Word is to a prophet in order to warn and correct His people when they stray from His way.

God knows us before birth: Yahweh (The Covenant God) knew Jeremiah even before He formed him in his mother's womb. Let us give thanks to God because He knows us even before we are born.

Prophet to nations: And God gave Jeremiah speak His Word to the nations (Genesis 12:1-3).

2. Then I said, 'Adonai Yahweh, Behold! I do not know to speak because I am young'. (Verse 6)

Too young to know: Jeremiah singles himself out as being still a teenager. Most people God calls to a task feel inadequate to the task.

3. Then Yahweh said, 'Do not say "I am a youth", because to all whom I send you, you will go; and, all that I command you, you will speak. You will not be afraid because I am with you to deliver you. (Verses 7-8)

Go and speak: The Covenant God is emphatically saying He will enable and empower Jeremiah to go and to speak for Him. **God with us:** This is because He will be with Jeremiah to deliver him whenever his call is difficult.

4. Then Yahweh put forth His hand and touched (Jeremiah's) mouth and said, 'Behold! I have put My words in your mouth, and I have set you over nations and kingdoms ...' (Verses 9-10a)

His words: Jeremiah will speak The Covenant God's words, not his own.

I have set: God has chosen and set up Jeremiah to declare His words to all people.

5. '... to pluck up, break down, destroy and throw down; and to build and plant'. (Verses 10b-d)

Break down, then build up: God's people are so far gone that they must be broken down before they can be built up!

B. Yahweh's word to Jeremiah: Stand at the door of My house telling all Jews to do good to live here; and, do not oppress or be deceived to rebellion or make My house a cave of robbers. (Jeremiah 7:1-11)

1. Then the Word of Yahweh was to Jeremiah to say: 'Stand in the gate of Yahweh's house and proclaim this word, "Hear the Word of Yahweh all of Judah who enter these gates to worship Yahweh"'. (Verses 1-2)

Jews, hear God's Word: The primary audience is the people of Judah because the people of Israel had been taken away by the Assyrians over one hundred years before this. They must hear Yahweh.

2. 'Thus says Yahweh, The God of Israel: Amend (make good) your ways and deeds and I will let you dwell in this place; do not trust in your own deceptive words: The Temple of Yahweh. The Temple of Yahweh. The Temple of Yahweh'. (Verses 3-4)

Make ways good: Literally, God told His people to make their ways good. Many have translated this to amend or to reform their ways. All people must move from self-deception to THE Truth.

Be NOT deceived: Their vain repetition about God's Temple will not make them right with God. They will ONLY be right with God when they turn from their idolatrous ways and give themselves to God with all they are. (Deuteronomy 6)

Let us give thanks that IN Jesus we can be delivered from deception to do good.

3. 'Because, if you do indeed make your ways and deeds good, if you truly do justice with one another, if you do not oppress the stranger, fatherless and widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place and do not go after other 'gods' to your hurt, I will let you dwell in this place that I gave to your fathers, from eternity (past) until eternity (future)'. (Verses 5-7)

Do justice: Two weeks ago we heard Yahweh say the same words about doing justice to Micah over one hundred years before this. (Micah 6:6-8)

Do NOT oppress: God does not want His people oppressing others. He delivered them from oppression in Egypt.

Live in fruitful land: If they amend themselves to make good their ways AND stay faithful to their Covenant God, He will allow them to remain in the fruitful land He set aside for the descendants of Abraham (Genesis 15).

When they stray from His way, God will break them down to build them up.

God breaks down those not repenting and builds up those amending their ways

4. 'Behold! All of you are yourselves trusting deceptive (lying) words to no profit (benefit)'. (Verse 8)
Warning: This is a strong warning to God's people, and all of us, to only trust in God's words, not the words of people.
5. 'Will you all steal, murder and commit adultery, swear falsely and burn incense to Baal, and go after "gods" you have not known; and have come and stood before Me in this house, called by My Name, and have said, "we are delivered, in order to do all these abominations"?' (Verses 9-10)
Rebellion: The ability of people who know better to practice abominations before God is mind boggling. However, when we get honest before God, we realize we are really no better than other people. We all struggle to do right before God, to please Him, and to glorify Him.
6. 'Has this house, called by My Name, become a cave of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I have also seen this Myself'. (Verse 11)
Violent robbery in house: They are not fooling God. He has seen His people violently robbing others in His house, not just where they live their day-to-day lives. This behavior calls for God's tough LOVE of breaking down to build up. (Hebrews 12:4-11)

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II. Jesus cast out all in the Temple who exploited those coming to worship, quoting Jeremiah's prophecy and applying it to Himself. (Matthew 21:12-13)

- A. Jesus went into the Temple and cast out the merchants, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers and the tables of those selling doves. (Verse 12)
 1. And Jesus went into the Temple. (Verse 12a)
Holy place: The Temple was The Holy God's earthly residence. All entering should seek holiness.
 2. And He cast out all those selling and buying in the Temple. (Verse 12b)
Merchants: These were merchants who were not seeking God and His holiness, but rather to trade for personal profit.
 3. And He overthrew the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who are selling doves. (Verses 12c-d)
Exploiting the poor: People who lived far from the Temple sold their sacrificial animals at home in return for coins. When they got to the Temple, 'moneychangers' would sell them equivalent animals to sacrifice – for a fee. Doves were the offering of the poor for cleansing (Leviticus 5:7; 12:8; 14:21-22). These people were also looking to exploit God's most vulnerable people.
- Application:** Jesus is expelling those who exploit others for gain from the presence of God. Let us pray that we will seek to help the poor among us by God's grace to stay in communion with Him.

UN-repentant robbers will be driven from God's house

- B. And He is saying it has been written: My house will be called a house of prayer but you are making it a cave of robbers. (Verse 13)
 1. And He is saying to them, 'It has been written'. (Verse 13a)
Prophets: He is about to quote from and apply from the Word God gave to Jeremiah we have just considered.
 2. My house will be called a house of prayer. (Verse 13b)
Purpose: God desires that all who gather in His house will give Him praise and adoration; confess their sins to Him; thank Him for forgiving them and answered petitions; and, petition Him for disciples to be made in all nations, and for their neighbors, church family, family and themselves.
 3. But you all are making it a cave of robbers. (Verse 13c)
Defiled: These selfish people are distracting people from worship that will bring them into close communion with God and defiling God's Holy place. Jesus is right to drive them out.

Bottom line: It is paradoxical, but we can thank God that He breaks us down in order to build us up.

Then, instead of hurting others with selfish greed, we can live by prayerfully worshipping Him.

This will give us communion with Him IN The Savior Jesus.

God breaks down those not repenting and builds up those amending their ways.

Conclusion: The God of Israel calls a young man to deliver a strong message to His people. They have become so rebellious and deceived that they must be broken down to be built up. They have defiled the place where He is to be worshipped with self serving violence. And, when The Savior came six hundred years later, they still had not changed.

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