

## Monday Evening Bible Reading Group: Jeremiah 15:1-21: July 1<sup>st</sup>: Some Notes

The prosperity version of God is along the lines of: God looks after those who look up to Him – so sign up to God and He will look after you – No more problems, no more heart ache. The Bible has a number of passages in which individuals complain that the prosperity thing simply isn't happening. Sometimes, it isn't a complaint, inasmuch as there is a recognition that the individual or the nation has broken its part of the contract, so unpleasant consequences are predictable. Sometimes, there is a complaint: the complainant can't see any human shortcomings that would justify God's penalties or inaction.

The "nastiest" aspect of the "God is [or should be] on our side" mentality is an appeal for God to take it out on "the enemy". Jeremiah does this: Jeremiah 18 verses 19-23: *"Let their children starve! Let them be massacred in battle! Let their wives be childless and widowed, their friends and their proud young men be killed. Let cries of panic sound from their homes as you surprise them with war parties!.... Strike while the iron of your anger is hot!"*

As always with this revenge language, it is important to remember that (a) the complainant, in this case Jeremiah, is having a really tough time and has suffered a great deal "unfairly"; and (b) the revenge responsibility is being handed over to God. The complainant is NOT asking for God's blessing on the complainant murdering the children etc. If I get absolutely exasperated and wish God would do something nasty to someone, that is not as bad as me thumping that person. (Less risky too!)

### Jeremiah 15: 15-21: Jeremiah 15:15-21 The Message (MSG)

**15-18** You know where I am, GOD! Remember what I'm doing here!

Take my side against my detractors.

Don't stand back while they ruin me.

Just look at the abuse I'm taking!

When your words showed up, I ate them—  
swallowed them whole. What a feast!

What delight I took in being yours,  
O GOD, GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies!

I never joined the party crowd  
in their laughter and their fun.

Led by you, I went off by myself.

You'd filled me with indignation. Their sin had me seething.

But why, why this chronic pain,  
this ever worsening wound and no healing in sight?

You're nothing, GOD, but a mirage,  
a lovely oasis in the distance—and then nothing!

**19-21** This is how GOD answered me:

"Take back those words, and I'll take you back.

Then you'll stand tall before me.

Use words truly and well. Don't stoop to cheap whining.

Then, but only then, you'll speak for me.  
Let your words change *them*.  
Don't change your words to suit them.  
I'll turn you into a steel wall,  
a thick steel wall, impregnable.  
They'll attack you but won't put a dent in you  
because I'm at your side, defending and delivering."  
GOD's Decree.  
"I'll deliver you from the grip of the wicked.  
I'll get you out of the clutch of the ruthless."

**The Message (MSG)**

Maybe the simplest way of putting it is that there is no point in being a fair weather Christian, because every day is not going to be a sunny day. The realities of the lives of Jesus and the first disciples don't give us any reason to think that being a Christian will be easy. Jesus said "take up your cross", not "take up your lottery prize". However, there are rewards in being a Christian, if not necessarily financial ones or perfect health ones.

*How would you answer the reluctant potential convert to Christianity who asks, "What would I get out of it?"*