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## Titus – Making Things Right

### Chapter 2 - (vs. 1-2)

Well, we come to the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter in Titus. It starts off in an antithetical way; that is to say, he has already conveyed the things that you don't want to do. Now, he's saying, instead, that you need to do this. The way that the phrase starts off is "But as for you." What were they doing on the island of Crete? If you back up into Titus 1:10, it says,

"For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision,

(Titus 1:11) who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain.

(Titus 1:12) One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.'

(Titus 1:13) This testimony is true. For this reason reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith,

(Titus 1:14) not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth."

Interesting phrase there in verse 10, "empty talkers;" saying things that have no meaning or value, worthless words. See, sound doctrine is always tied to real and meaningful change. It's one of the things that Paul wants to emphasize. If you're just sitting around and "shooting the breeze" so to speak; people begin to philosophize and inject all kinds of perceptions of different people. "My grandpappy thought this" or whatever. When you go back to Zechariah 1, it says, "Do not be like your fathers." Scripture is very clear that you and I should honor the elders, but there's no fool like an old fool. If in fact the older person is doing the wrong thing, it doesn't mean that you should do what they do. That's not what honor is. Honor is being respectful in the way that you talk with them. It doesn't mean that you do what they say. So, Scripture oftentimes warns us of those that have gone before us and made tremendous mistakes.

The point of this passage is that there were people that were going around, and they had reputation, degrees, and pedigrees behind them. They had all kinds of ideas and thoughts about how things work; but he says, "Don't listen to them. It's messing up families. It's messing up the world." We've seen this trend happen in our day and age, haven't we? The experts start getting into things, and they come up with a great idea; everybody starts doing it and

everything gets messed up. Then they say, “Oh, yeah. Maybe we ought to try something else.” Then they try something else, and everybody flock to that. People are really much like sheep.

So, we have what is called truth. Truth never changes and it’s not only absolute, but it’s always efficacious. In other words, it always works. It’s one thing that really separates it from the philosophy of man; because the philosophy of man is just philosophy, but it’s not truth. So, Paul is getting them back to what has to be the foundation because if you’re going to listen to everyone and everybody about their own ideas, it’s going to mess you up.

He comes into this 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter in a way, by saying, “But you have to think differently.” This is not the first time that Paul has done this. If you back up into 2 Timothy 3, he starts off talking about the last days and chaos. It’s a perfect description of the world that we live in today. It is, in a way, a microcosm of Crete.

(2 Timothy 3:1) “But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.”

Then, he begins to describe once again the lifestyle and the kind of thinking that has been propagated.

(2 Timothy 3:2) “For men will be lovers of self...”

Obviously, we live in a very narcissistic world; probably more than ever before. When I was younger, I couldn’t imagine somebody saying to me, “I’ve just taken a selfie.” You know, we would have thought, “What are you doing that for? You don’t have any friends?”

“For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,

(2 Timothy 3:3) unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control...”

And bragging about it! “I don’t have any self-control.” Everybody applauds them.

“... brutal, haters of good,

(2 Timothy 3:4) treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure...”

Well yeah, we boast about that. “I’d rather be doing this than going to church.” Oh, and you’re good with that? “Yeah, I think that’s a good quality.”

“...lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

(2 Timothy 3:5) holding to a form of godliness...”

What is he talking about? Well, here again, the day and age that we live in, everybody is proclaiming that they’re the “good” guy. I mean, everybody is a god in and of themselves. “We did this” and “We rescued this,” “You buy this t-shirt, you save lives” whatever; but everybody is getting credit except for God.

“Holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power.”

What’s the real power? God is the real power. In Him you live and breathe and have your existence. “I did it!” You can’t breathe without Him. How can you take credit for that?

“Avoid such men as these.”

It goes on and says, (2 Timothy 3:6) “For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses,

(2 Timothy 3:7) always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

Why? Because the things that they’re teaching are just theories; they’re philosophies and ideas of men. It doesn’t work. It doesn’t have to work, it’s “a new idea.” People go, “Did you hear about this?” Everybody gets so excited that it’s something new. I don’t think you want to go with that.

Then, he begins to talk about those that opposed; even in the time of Moses.

It goes on and says that they’re going to make further progress, but the point is as he turns to Timothy, “But you don’t go that way.” If you see the passage, it’s much like Titus in this.

He says in verse 10, “Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance,

(2 Timothy 3:11) persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch...”

In other words, “you need to do the right thing. I know it’s going to cost you, Timothy, but do the right thing.”

(2 Timothy 3:12) “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

Once again, verse 14, “You, however”. So, you see that in verse 10 and then in verse 14, “You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced...”

You know what the truth is. Of course, he gives us the example in verse 15 and 16. Timothy’s mother was one of them; because she was somebody genuine, and he actually saw her teaching work. So, he brings him back to reality. A lot of people have a lot of ideas, but it causes mayhem, chaos and confusion. That’s what was happening in Crete.

So, as we go to Titus 2, that’s what we’re seeing as he then turns us away from the things of the world and brings us back to that which is of sound doctrine.

(Titus 2:1) “But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.”

He could have used a phrase that says something like, “say the words,” but he uses the phrase “speak the words.” Now, there are actually two different words that are oftentimes used in the Greek that make reference to “the words that are spoken.” One of them is “*legó*” which is

talking about the message itself. In this particular passage, he uses the word “*laleō*” which is more talking about the sound that you emit. Now, within the verse he’s going to be talking about sound doctrine. So, he’s very concerned about the words that are said, but he’s going to start off this way because he’s going to be getting in a realm in which we have discussions. Probably one of the best ways to describe the word “*laleō*” in this context is “chattering; just talking”. He wants to put it in the context of you just daily talking because the tendency is to think, “I’m going to teach sound doctrine when I’m in church.” He goes, “No. All the time.” All of the conversations that you have should be of sound doctrine. Think about that.

So, Ephesians 4 will say, “only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment.” So, don’t just throw words out there; be selective in the things that you say. It’s ok to have fun and joke around, but when it comes to your speech, you want truth to be at the focal point; you want to bring people back to that and for them to see that in you. It’s a way of life. I think that’s one of the reasons why he uses the word; because he wants you to think of this as a way of life. If it’s not a way of life, then it’s not going to be impactful. It’s just not. If from time to time you have sound doctrine spots in your life, it’s really not an influence. In some ways, it’s referring to conversation. Oftentimes, the word “conversation” is making reference to the way that you walk, talk, and the things that you do all the time; conversational life so to speak.

The passage is saying that as for you, let your conversation, your way of life, and the chattering that you have, even at the place where you have coffee and cookies be honorable. The phrase that he uses, “which are fitting,” is a very picturesque word. It could probably be drawn out like a tower. It has the connotation of “conspicuous.” The point is, let your words be conspicuously sound. We could put it another way, let them not be ambiguous or let them be clear. Let people see clearly where you stand on specific issues so that there is that sense of well-being; that’s the word “sound.” It really emphasizes that which is whole in faith; uncluttered. We would probably put it another way, uncorrupt; whatever you say has no error in it. That means you and I are going to have to do some thinking before we open our mouths. Once again, it goes back to Ephesians, “only such a word.” Is it beneficial? Is it going to help or is it going to destroy? When you consider sound doctrine, it is that which instead of degrading people, it edifies; and instead of dividing people, it unites. Sound doctrine is always bringing about that which literally produces lasting fruit and benefit; whereas the dissipation of man, Scripture says, “Don’t run in the same dissipation as they do.” What is he talking about? The waste. What are you doing wasting your life talking about stuff that really doesn’t matter?

I remember when that hit me. There was a time that I was in-between ministries. So, I had to go out and make some money. I’m out there. You know, when you’re in the workforce, people talk about all kinds of things. On this particular occasion, during the break, they would have a tv in the breakroom. Usually, there’s about 20-30 people at one time in the breakroom. The tv is on, and this particular day, Oprah Winfrey was on. For some reason, the discussion on that show was on “end times.” So, for the first time, I’m watching everybody, and people stopped eating

and just watched the tv. As they were talking on the tv, you could see that they were a little confused, and nobody really had any answers. You know how you have those moments where the Lord goes, "Ok, now you need to say something"? Oprah said some statement such as, "Well, nobody really knows what's going to happen." I said, "That's not exactly true." Then, everybody turned around and looked at me. Well, it gave me an opportunity to say something. So, I went into a little dissertation, which I felt right at home. Afterwards, I had about four guys come up to me, and they said, "This is what we need. We need to hear this." They looked at me, and they said, "Would you have a Bible study at our house?" That's how this church was started. A Monday night Bible study at somebody's house by people that weren't going to church anywhere but were searching. You have to come to a point in time in your life where you go, "Am I just going to waste my life talking about all these stupid things that nobody knows what they're talking about, or am I going to talk about truth and anchor some souls here?" We have something sure and steadfast; an anchor for our souls; a truth that can bring about true security in their lives.

The difference between what we have and what they have is that we have something real. The truth literally breathes life into people's being. You just see them, "We need this." People that are searching are going, "We need something like this." You can feel the Spirit of God shaking you up, and saying, "Ok, so are you going to waste your time like 'empty talkers', or are you going to say something meaningful?"

So, Titus 2:1 starts off, "But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine."

Sound teaching, "*didaskalia*," makes reference to not only a sense of teaching, but a sense of absolute teaching that is literally going to change people's lives. More specifically, something that will lead to godliness. I can't overstress that there is so much verbiage that is going on that doesn't benefit anybody. None, and it oftentimes happens in the church. People argue over things that I'm thinking, "What does that matter?" The bottom line is how is this leading you closer to Christ? If it doesn't lead you closer to Christ, then stop talking about it. It's not beneficial; it's empty; it has no value to it. I would also say this, if in fact you're teaching the truth, and nobody is listening and doing what is said, then you're just blowing out hot air. This has to be practiced. This is why Titus 2 is going to emphasize, "Older men, teach the younger men to do this" and "Older women, teach the younger women to do this." That's what is called "sound doctrine." Sound doctrine is getting people to do something. You and I can sit around and talk about faith all day long, but as James would say, unless it really changes what you do, it's dead. "Faith without works is dead." (James 2:17) You need to put these things into practice.

In chapter 2, we're going into the practicality of it and the efficacy of truth. Once again, truth will always be beneficial, but truth has to be practiced; otherwise, it's not true. If you look in verse 2, "Older men..."

Well, where are we going to begin? The same place that he talks about an overseer being above reproach; and then he goes into what kind of people these are. Titus 1:5 says, “appoint elders;” people that have put to practice these things. We oftentimes hear the phrase “been there, done that.” Well, there’s something important about that because you want to be able to share something that you yourself have personally seen to be true; and this is what adds credibility to teaching. Once again, I think one of the great problems today is, as Paul writes to Timothy, people are making confident assertions about things they don’t understand. What does he mean by that? He doesn’t mean that they can’t comprehend what is being said; he means that they’ve never put it to practice. They have no idea what they’re talking about. So, there is no value in it to them or conviction.

So, he starts off with “Older men;” that they should have the sense of track record in which they have a sense of disposition towards doing certain things in a certain way; it’s become their way of life, and they can share experientially.

So, it reads this way, “Older men are to be temperate...” Now, when he uses the word “temperate,” it is a word that is directly connected to not drinking wine. The King James version translates it as “sober;” which means not drinking wine. The point is parallel to Proverbs 31. We’ve read it before, but for the sake of clarifying, if you’ll look with me in Proverbs 31. In the first 9 verses, you’re going to see this fundamental principle, as Peter will say, that we’re a royal priesthood; which means that we’re sons of a king, and that would make you a prince or princess. So, in Proverbs 31, you see the mother talking to her son that is a prince and will be the king. As she begins to teach him, she begins to show him what is valuable and what he can’t do because he is a king. Now, the text is not referring to the fact any more than Titus is referring to the fact that it’s wrong to drink. It’s not saying that. It’s saying that it is not for kings. So, just to clarify, there’s always a higher standard for those that have positions.

(Proverbs 31:3) “Do not give your strength to women,  
Or your ways to that which destroys kings.”

(Proverbs 31:4) It is not for kings, O Lemuel,  
It is not for kings to drink wine...”

“Period. It's not for you.”

“I can do whatever I want to; I’m a king.”

“Yes, you can, but you’re a king and you’re not to do it because you *are* a king.”

“Why?”

“Because you have decisions to make, and you can't afford not to be sober in every decision that you make; because your decisions have weight.”

So, it’s not for rulers.

(Proverbs 31:5) “For they will drink and forget what is decreed,  
And pervert the rights of all the afflicted.”

In other words, you have to be sober-minded. So, when he’s talking about “temperate,” he’s talking about somebody that is sober. The direct definition would be “abstaining from wine;” has the emphasis of “vigilant, sober”.

It then goes on and says, “dignified.” (Titus 2:2) Now, “dignified” will emphasize honorable behavior. It will tie in “honorable” with “honest;” somebody that is honorable in his dealings and is honest in all the things that he does. I do think it should be noted that he’s starting off with “These are older men that have this track record.” They’re known for this.

It goes on and says that they need to be “sensible;” that is to say, they’re able to curb their appetite. They’re able to control their desires. A young person will say, “I want this,” and you’ll say, “Well, maybe you ought to wait.” “I don’t want to wait.” We’re talking about an older person saying, “You know what? I think I can go without this.” Especially if it could cause hurt to somebody else or would cause somebody to stumble in this case. “I’m not going to do it.” Well, a young person will go, “I have the right to do whatever I want to.” That’s true, but God has called the one in charge to have a higher standard. So, he’s thoughtful about the things that he does. He’s not controlled by his desires or his impulses, but he’s actually controlled by what is right. Of course, there are a lot of verses that pertain to that; whether it be 1 Corinthians 8 or chapter 10. All of those chapters emphasize that you have a responsibility. The book of Matthew will emphasize that as well.

Then, “sound in faith.” Now, he’ll add and build upon this. Once again, you’re looking at something that is well or strong. So, we would say “strong in faith” and somebody that is strong in their convictions or belief. They’re not going to compromise; they’re not going to move from that place. This is a picture of maturity. Once again, somebody that’s not up and down or moving one way and the other, but they believe what they believe, and they hold fast to this. Now, if you see this, you’re sound in your faith, love, and perseverance. So, the three are really drawn together at the very end. “Perseverance” means that you’re unmovable; you’re not going to move from your devotion despite the greatest of trials.

What really is drawn out of this is that word “love.” First of all, you’re not going to be unfaithful to God ever. Then, it doesn’t matter what people do or what happens, you’re going to remain firm in your devotion to God and His people. See, we live in a world where people like people because they do something for them, or they hate them because they don’t do something from them; but Christians love because they love God, and they’ll do it for Him. That’s a big difference. Look let’s face it, there are a lot of people that are very unlovable, but we don’t love people because they’re lovable or unlovable; we love them because He first loved us, and He tells us “Love one another.” It’s not an option. I have given my life to God. So, I can’t take into account a wrong suffered according to 1 Corinthians 13. If you do something to me, I might be upset about it. I can’t let the sun go down on my wrath. I have to forgive i.e., let it go. I can’t

absolve you of your sins, but I have to let it go, and I have to keep loving you. I don't have an option. I don't do that because you're lovable or because I'm a loving person; I do it because I love God, and the love of Christ constrains me. Is there anything you wouldn't do for Him? It always boils down to that. Is there anything you wouldn't do for God? I always come up with the same answer. No, there's nothing that I wouldn't do for Him.

What we have is a picture of a progression of sorts because as you go on, the older men are going to be teaching the younger men to be sensible. Of course, they can't teach the young men to be sensible if they're not sensible. So, they're going to be teaching them. The point is that they've graduated from this. Paul will state in Philippians 3, "as many as are perfect." He uses the word that makes reference to "mature, let this mind continue," and he calls others to this state of maturity.

How do you get there? I thought it was interesting and it was helpful for me to walk through the process. So, we've been there before, but we're going to take this little journey of going all the way back to the book of Jeremiah. One of the reasons why I appreciate this book so much is because this particular book allows us to watch somebody grow up. Literally, Jeremiah's growing up right in front of our eyes. As he's called in the very beginning of Jeremiah 1, you see his apprehension. He's a young guy, he's not up for the task. Yeah, he doesn't feel worthy or ready; he doesn't feel equipped. If we were to use psychological terms, his self-esteem is a little low, but God says, "I formed you in your mother's womb. I have a plan for you, and this is what you're going to do." Jeremiah's response is clearly human, and you can see youth relating this to God.

So, it picks up in Jeremiah 1:4,

"Now the word of the LORD came to me saying,

(Jeremiah 1:5) 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,  
And before you were born I consecrated you;  
I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.'

(Jeremiah 1:6) Then I said, 'Alas, Lord GOD!  
Behold, I do not know how to speak,  
Because I am a youth.'"

(Jeremiah 1:7) But the LORD said to me,  
'Do not say, 'I am a youth,'  
Because everywhere I send you, you shall go..."

And Jeremiah will go. Now, I can tell you this, as he begins to go, he stumbles and trips and falls; he cries out, gets upset and angry, but we literally watch him grow up.

He then turns to him in verse 8, and he says, "You can't be afraid." Of course, that's youth too. You're afraid of "All these guys are a lot smarter than me; they're older than me." It's

intimidating, but He says within the passage, “You can’t be afraid of them because the words that I’m going to give you are truth, and you’re going to start living this out.” I mean, you’ve got to start somewhere, right?

So, God says, “I’m going to make you strong. I just want to let you know ahead of time that they’re not going to like you; they’re going to fight against you.” I think the way it reads in verse 19 is “They will fight against you.” Isn’t that the way it reads? So, things are not going to go well. Then, God begins the prophecy with Jeremiah.

When you begin to read chapters 2 and 3, a lot of what you’re reading is God’s relationship with His people and how they have hurt Him. As you’re reading these things, you’re seeing, “Ok, God’s hurt. I get it. God’s hurt; but He’s God, He can get over it.” You can sense that God feels grieved over the fact. If you’ve ever had a child just fundamentally incorrigible, and you had to keep going back over and over again; finally, you come to a point, and you go, “Nothing seems to be working with this kid.”

So, it says in Jeremiah 2:30,

“In vain I have struck your sons;  
They accepted no chastening.  
Your sword has devoured your prophets  
Like a destroying lion.”

And nobody is going to heed. How frustrating is that? You try to get somebody to do the right thing, but they don’t do the right thing; consequences start beating them up, and they still don’t do the right thing. It’s like they can’t learn.

If you go into chapter 3, then it starts getting really personal with God, and He goes, “You’ve just plain been unfaithful to Me.” He describes “faithless Israel” and “treacherous Judah,” and how they’ve hurt Him.

Jeremiah 3:13 is “If you would only just admit that you were wrong.” That’s all you have to do and then it’s over. It’s gone. It’s finished. What you’ll see repeated over and over again is the call of God, “Return. Come back.” So, you’ll see that in Jeremiah 3:14. Then, once again, if you drop on down to verse 22, “Return, O faithless sons.” Then, when you go into chapter 4, He says, “If you return, it has to be with your whole heart.” What I’m saying is, you’re hearing the heart of God.

Now, when a young prophet begins to share these things with people, he doesn’t have enough experience to really just put this thing on the table, but God is going to give him experience. His initial response seems to be “maybe the people just don’t understand.” It’s like if somebody comes to you, maybe for counseling, and they say, “I’m just having a really difficult time with this person in my life.” Since it’s not directly affecting you, you go, “Well, maybe you just don’t understand what they’re going through.” Of course, you throw that out there just because it could be possible, but the fact of the matter is that you don’t understand what they’re going

through. Your thought is, “Maybe You’re being mean God. Why don’t You be a little bit more patient? Maybe the people are just a little stupid;” and that’s a compliment, basically.

So, if you look in chapter 5, God says, “Go ahead.” In verse 1, “Roam through the streets; see if you can find somebody.”

“I’m sure there’s somebody out there that seeks the truth,” and God goes, “Go ahead. It’s not like I haven’t tried.”

Look what it says in verse 4,

“Then I said, ‘They are only the poor,  
They are foolish...’”

“That’s the problem.” That’s not true.

Well, God begins to pour out His heart, and continues to pour out His heart to Jeremiah. Jeremiah really hasn’t experienced this, but he will.

Go with me to Jeremiah 11. We fast forward in Jeremiah’s life, and this is where he starts growing up. He finally has said this whole message. Of course, the people are starting to get really ticked off at him. So, they’re taking it out on him now. Now, you have to remember that the people who are going to hit him the hardest are going to be his family. It’s going to be the group from Anathoth, where he lived; the Benjamites. All of them, the whole nine yards, are going to hang him on the door.

If you’ll look with me, he cries out in chapter 11, and he goes, “Ok, so, You’re helping me understand this, Lord.”

God says in Jeremiah 11:14,

“Therefore do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them; for I will not listen when they call to Me because of their disaster

(Jeremiah 11:15) What right has My beloved in My house  
When she has done many vile deeds?”

Obviously, we’re talking about the infidelity of Israel and Judah to the Lord.

(Jeremiah 11:16) “The LORD called your name,  
‘A green olive tree, beautiful’... And its branches are worthless.”

Verse 18 is a key change in the book of Jeremiah. Read with me in verse 18,

“Moreover, the LORD made it known to me and I knew it...”

Now, Jeremiah is going from prophecy of hurt towards God to “I feel the pain because they’re hurting me,” and that’s a huge difference. It’s one thing as a young person to go around, “I can

tell you this and this and this,” and everybody’s an expert when they’re young; but you start going through it, and you begin to understand what pain is. He said, “The Lord made it known to me.” You say, “How did the Lord make it known?”

“Then You showed me their deeds.”

How did He show him their deeds? Watch verse 19, “But I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter.” Does it sound familiar? I wonder if he takes the quote from Isaiah.

“... I did not know that they had devised plots against me, saying,  
‘Let us destroy the tree... That his name be remembered no more.’

(Jeremiah 11:20) O LORD of hosts, who judges righteously,  
Who tries the feelings and the heart,  
Let me see Your vengeance on them...”

Now, we’re getting serious. Why? “Because now they’ve hurt me. I understand them hurting God, and it was a bad thing. Maybe they were just a little stupid, but now they’ve hurt me. Get them!”

(Jeremiah 11:21) “Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the men of Anathoth...”

Which was his hometown. All you have to do is go back to Jeremiah 1:1.

“...who seek your life, saying, ‘Do not prophesy in the name of the LORD, so that you will not die at our hand’;”

In other words, in other words, they’re now threatening to kill him.

So, we know go into chapter 12. It reads this way, as he begins to cry unto the Lord, “God, I know you’re righteous. I know you’re going to do the right thing, but I would like just a word with You.”

“Indeed I would discuss matters of justice with You...”

Justice isn’t that important until injustice has happened to you, but that’s part of the growing up process.

“Why has the way of the wicked prospered?  
Why are all those who deal in treachery at ease?”

(Jeremiah 12:2) You have planted them, they have also taken root;  
They grow, they have even produced fruit.  
You are near to their lips  
But far from their mind.

(Jeremiah 12:3) But You know me, O LORD;  
You see me;

And You examine my heart's attitude toward You.  
Drag them off like sheep for the slaughter..."

Then, what does he ask in verse 4?

"How long does this go on?"

Well, the one thing oftentimes missing in youth is the ability to endure. That's why it's one of the last words; perseverance, remember that in Titus? "Faith, love, perseverance..." Hanging in there; not moving.

God turns to him, and He says an interesting quote in verse 5,

"If you have run with footmen and they have tired you out,  
Then how can you compete with horses?"

That's God's way of saying, "It's not getting easier; it's going to get harder. If you're already tired out, you don't know what hard is yet."

(Jeremiah 12:6) "For even your brothers and the household of your father,  
Even they have dealt treacherously with you,  
Even they have cried aloud after you.  
Do not believe them, although they may say nice things to you.

(Jeremiah 12:7) I have forsaken My house,  
I have abandoned My inheritance;  
I have given the beloved of My soul  
Into the hand of her enemies."

Who's talking now? God. What is He doing? He's helping Jeremiah see that He has been hurting all along. See, when you first start off in ministry, it's like, all about you. This is one of the problems when you have someone go into ministry too young; because if they go in that way, and then they continue in that mindset, they're not going to make it. However, it's part of the maturing process, and God is going to have all of us that are following Him go through some difficulty. We're going to go through some rejection, heartache, pain; the people that we love are somehow going to hurt us. We're not going to stop loving. We're not going to stop with our convictions. We're going to hold firm to those things, and we're going to persevere to the end.

When you're young, you're wrestling with these things, and you're going, "Ok, I think I draw the line." God goes, "Do you have any idea what I've been going through? These are My people; this is My inheritance; this is My hurt. I have been patient all along. Do you not understand what's going on here?" Even through all of this; even through all of the treacheries that have been shown to Him, what is His hope according to Jeremiah 12:15? His hope is that He "will again have compassion on them." His compassions fail not... great is His faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22-23) A young person hasn't learned that steadfastness, "I'm not going to hate that person. I'm not going to stop loving that person. I'm not going to stop serving the

Lord.” There are all kinds of things in your world that are going to be topsy-turvy, and people are going to things that are wrong; but if God is going to use you greatly, you’re going to have to decide, “The greatest crime isn’t that they have done this against me; the greatest crime is they have done this against God. God, on the cross while being reviled, He didn’t revile in return. So, I’m not going to start. They did it against Him. Now, because they’ve done it against me, what? Now, I’m mad? I’m not going to go there.” Jeremiah is going to wrestle with this. There’s a key point in all of this. Probably, the lowest that Jeremiah gets is in Jeremiah 15, I would say. If you were to go through the whole concept of “how low can you go?” I’d probably go into Jeremiah 15, and begin to see the great sorrow that he has to deal with.

He expresses it this way,

(Jeremiah 15:10) “Woe to me, my mother, that you have borne me  
As a man of strife and a man of contention to all the land!  
I have not lent, nor have men lent money to me,  
Yet everyone curses me.

(Jeremiah 15:11) The LORD said, ‘Surely I will set you free for purposes of good...’

He then conveys that “I wish I had never been born.” He shares in chapter 15 that “I didn’t sit around with people and just have a good time; I purposely did what You told me to do. Everybody else is having a good time, and here I am, alone. I’m all alone.” All of this to say that Jeremiah’s growing up. Well, if you follow the book through, you begin to realize he has grown up, and he begins ministering to the very people that then begin to abuse him. He will go to Egypt with the very people that he told not to go to Egypt, and he will suffer with them. He won’t let them go.

As a result of his pain and sorrow, the book of Lamentations is written. If you look at this book with me, in particular chapter 4. He begins to cry out. Of course, because of all the horrific things that are happening at this time, you can see it pulling at his heart strings; but what’s interesting to me is that he identifies himself in the book of Lamentations with the very people that have been hurting him. If you look in Lamentations 3:42, “We have transgressed and rebelled, You have not pardoned.” Do you understand what he just did? He included himself; just like Daniel in chapter 9, right? “We have sinned.” “But Daniel, you haven’t sinned.” “No, no. They’re my people.” The boy has grown up. He’s not thinking, “What about me? I’m all alone. What about me? Everybody has rejected me.” He doesn’t say that anymore because he has a perseverance of faith and love that can’t be shaken. See, this is what makes an elder credible to the people that he’s teaching; that he’s unshakeable in the things that he believes in. You say, “Aren’t you mad? Aren’t you upset?” Why? I’ve done this for the Lord. Yeah, people are going to treat me wrong. Yeah, there are people that will be upset. I hear all the time, “The pastor is really upset because somebody offended them.” What? Why are you worried about that? You’re serving God. You shouldn’t be worried about that.

If you look with me in chapter 5, look how he starts off,

(Lamentations 5:1) “Remember, O LORD, what has befallen us; Look, and see our reproach!

(Lamentations 5:2) Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers, Our houses to aliens.

(Lamentations 5:3) We have become orphans...”

It begins to share how he cares for these people.

We’re going to stop there, but we’re going to see “older men, you need to do this” and “older women, you need to do this.” Here again, we’re talking experientially and by examples, and we’re going to see the very advice that they give is very practical, like “stay home. Be with your kids. Help your husband.” The world would like to say, “Oh, let’s talk about deep philosophical things.” Yeah, but it doesn’t change anything. There’s no benefit to the home. So, truth is always going to draw you into that which is godly change.

#### **Closing Prayer:**

Father, we give You thanks for Your Word. We give You thanks for this example that we have of older men that are steadfast in what they believe; unshakeable, unswerving in their dedication, devotion and in their fidelity to You and to Your people. They love You and they love Your people, and they’re not moving from that. Nothing, no matter what somebody does to them, is going to move them from that place. How wonderful it is to see that which is the maturity of Christ in others. Lord, may we produce that within this body as Your Spirit moves within us. We know we can’t do this on our own, but we do believe that this is what You desire in us; that the person of Jesus Christ be seen in us. We pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.