

Running with Horses?

Jeff Rogers / Empty Nesters Bible Study
Jeremiah 12

The questions we ask God (though He alone sets the standard for righteousness):

- Why do the wicked prosper? (Jer 12:1)
- Why are the treacherous happy in life? (Jer 12:1)

What we may be asking between the lines is, “Does this relationship with God really work?” “Does a mouth-only Christianity work?” (Jer 12:2) This tension between Christianity in name only and genuine living faith is one that has existed throughout time and continues today. In fact, John, at the end of the first century, addresses in his first letter:

1 John 1:6–7, *If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 1 John 2:4–5*, *Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: 1 John 2:9*, *Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.*

Why do we ask such questions? Where do they come from in our minds? What are we looking at, or what are we missing that causes us to question our course? These kinds of questions, at their root, can come from doubt in the course a believer is set on (weariness, discouragement, defeat, fatigue, despondent, etc.). Job asked many of the same questions:

Job 21:7–15, *Why do the wicked live, reach old age, and grow mighty in power? 8 Their offspring are established in their presence, and their descendants before their eyes. 9 Their houses are safe from fear, and no rod of God is upon them. 10 Their bull breeds without fail; their cow calves and does not miscarry. 11 They send out their little boys like a flock, and their children dance. 12 They sing to the tambourine and the lyre and rejoice to the sound of the pipe. 13 They spend their days in prosperity, and in peace they go down to Sheol. 14 They say to God, ‘Depart from us! We do not desire the knowledge of your ways. 15 What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit do we get if we pray to him?’*

I. The Conspiracy against Godly Living

- A. The Active Threat (**Jeremiah 11:19** *But I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter. I did not know it was against me they devised schemes, saying, “Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name be remembered no more.”*)
1. Jeremiah’s enemies sought to kill him. **Jeremiah 11:21**, *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.”*
 2. Repel his future influence through descendants (**Jeremiah 11:19**, *Let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name be remembered no more.*)
 3. Jeremiah’s enemies were citizens of his hometown (**Jer 11:21**) and members of his own family (**Jeremiah 12:6**) **Jeremiah 12:6**, *For even your brothers and the house of your father, even they have dealt treacherously with you; they are in full cry after you; do not believe them, though they speak friendly words to you.”*
- B. Why?
1. Threat to the priestly community’s power & influence
 2. Threat to their economic exploitation
 3. Anathoth disapproved of the message. **Jeremiah 11:21**, *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” —*
 - a) **Jeremiah 5:31**, *The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule at their direction; my people love to have it so, but what will you do when the end comes?*
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- b) **Jeremiah 6:13**, *“For from the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain; and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely.”*
- C. **1 Peter 5:8**, *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.* **Ephesians 6:11**, *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.* Are we living for God in such a way that we are drawing enemy fire? Or, is the enemy content to let us live our Christian life in name only while we pass time in our luke-warmness?

II. The Commitment to Godly Living

- A. Commit your cause to the Lord (**Jeremiah 11:20**, *But, O Lord of hosts, who judges righteously, who tests the heart and the mind, let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you have I committed my cause.*)
1. Remain faithful despite resistance.
 2. Trust the Lord despite the current standing
 3. Commit our cause (legal case) to the righteous judge. (not take matters into our own hands)
- B. Remember God’s commitment to the believer (**Jeremiah 1:8**)
1. **His promise - Jeremiah 1:8**, *Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord.”*
 2. His personal knowledge
 - a) **Jeremiah 12:3**, *But you, O Lord, know me; you see me, and test my heart toward you. Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and set them apart for the day of slaughter.*
 - b) **Jeremiah 15:15**, *O Lord, you know; remember me and visit me, and take vengeance for me on my persecutors. In your forbearance take me not away; know that for your sake I bear reproach.*
 - c) **Jeremiah 18:23**, *Yet you, O Lord, know all their plotting to kill me. Forgive not their iniquity, nor blot out their sin from your sight. Let them be overthrown before you; deal with them in the time of your anger.*

III. The Contending to Godly Living

- A. You must face the temptation to succumb to the temptation (**1 Corinthians 10:13**, *No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*
- B. You must exercise humbleness (**Micah 6:8**, *He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*
- C. You must draw your strength from the Lord (**Deuteronomy 33:25**, . . . *and as your days, so shall your strength be.*
- D. You must rest in the future judgment of God as Asaph remembers (**Psalms 73:27**, *For behold, those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you.*)

We must free ourselves from the false belief that God exists to make things easier in this life or to keep “bad stuff” away from us. Far from answering Jeremiah with a pleasant answer such as, “Don’t worry, I will fix all your problems, I will heal all your ills, I will mend every broken relationship.” Instead, God looks to Jeremiah and says you must prepare for more significant challenges! **Jeremiah 12:5**, *“If you have raced with men on foot, and they have 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’s answers often end with a question mark when we try to place Him on the witness stand. Derek Kidner has said, *“God’s answer is never philosophical, as though he owed us explanations, but always pastoral, to rebuke us, reorientate us or reassure us.”*¹

- **He answered Job with a question - Job 38:2–3**, *“Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? 3 Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me.”*
- **He answered Paul with a question - Romans 9:20**, *But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?”*

¹ Ryken, Philip Graham. *Jeremiah and Lamentations: From Sorrow to Hope*. Preaching the Word. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001.

Pain hurts and we want it to stop.

Fear of the unknown outcomes.

Jealousy, we want what God has not ordained for us.

Fairness, life is not fair, and we want fairness.

Love, if God is so loving; the pain would not be present.

God does not coddle our fears with false promises...

- The Word of the Lord in the Old Testament was/is perhaps more than we could ever imagine. The Word of the Lord was meant to be seen with the eyes and heard with the ears, and there are several examples of this in Scripture:
 - Abraham and the word of the Lord (Gen 15:1,17)
 - Samuel and the word of the Lord (1 Samuel 3:1, 4, 21)
 - Jeremiah and the word of the Lord (Jeremiah 1:4-5, 9)
 - **John 1:1–2, 14**, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

E.

F. What verdict would God give on your life?

1. Do we forget God in our daily life?
2. Do we establish our own righteousness rather than pursuing Christ's righteousness?
3. Do we rebel against the Lordship of Christ when given clear instructions & commands?
4. Do we add any other "gods" in our life (money, positions, fame, stuff)?
5. Do you love God like a newly married bride?