

## INTRODUCTION

Take your Bible if you will and open it to the book of **Jeremiah**. Jeremiah 16, where we return to our study of Jeremiah.

We have been studying the 5<sup>th</sup> message of 14 on the Condemnation of Judah that Jeremiah was instructed to give to the people.

This 5<sup>th</sup> message is one of *punishment*, specifically, God's resolve or determination to punish the people of Judah for their wickedness.

I thought it helpful to begin this message by addressing the topic of punishment and discipline.

God uses hardship and affliction as a means of discipline. As a father corrects his children, so does our Heavenly Father corrects His own.

We read in **Heb. 12:5-11** the following:

<sup>5</sup> And you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM;  
<sup>6</sup> FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE FLOGS EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."

<sup>7</sup> It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline?

<sup>8</sup> But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them. Shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?

<sup>10</sup> For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but **He disciplines us for our benefit**, so that we may share His holiness.

<sup>11</sup> And all discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful, but to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

There is a *punitive* element in the discipline described by the writer of Hebrews. There is no doubt God disciplines His children in love and for their good, but there is a punishment involved in discipline.

Notice the words in v. 6, “HE **FLOGS** EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES” (LSB). This comes from **Prov. 3:11, 12**.

If you have the ESV, “**chastises** every son whom he receives.”  
Or if you have the NAS, “HE **SCOURGES** EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.”

It might surprise you but the Greek term means to “*beat with a whip or lash*.” To flog, scourge as a punishment. It was a painful form of beating that was common in Jewish practice. Thus in this Hebrew text it is “*to punish with discipline in mind*.”<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps it is hard for us to think God punishing His children, but that is what we read in Hebrews 12. The words used in this passage imply “parental punishment, colored by disapproval, mixed with sternness and a degree of severity.”<sup>2</sup>

If you recall, “*Yahweh was angry enough **with Aaron** to destroy him*” in **Deut. 9:20** as with the people for worshipping a golden calf.

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<sup>1</sup> William Arndt et al., A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 620.

<sup>2</sup> John MacArthur, *The Freedom and Power of Forgiveness*, electronic ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 63.

In **1 Kings 11:9**, we read –

<sup>9</sup> Now Yahweh was angry **with Solomon** because his heart was turned away from Yahweh, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice,

Both Aaron and Solomon were redeemed men but God was angered because of their sins.

Our Lord Jesus was “*indignant*” with the disciples for refusing to allow children to come to Him (**Mk. 10:14**). There is no way around the fact that there is a punitive component in God’s discipline.

If you look at the *Davidic Covenant* in **Ps. 89:30-33** we read –

<sup>29</sup> “So I will set up his seed *to endure* forever  
And his throne as the days of heaven.

<sup>30</sup> “If his sons forsake My law  
And do not walk in My judgments,

<sup>31</sup> If they profane My statutes  
And do not keep My commandments,

<sup>32</sup> **Then I will punish their transgression with the rod  
And their iniquity with striking.**

<sup>33</sup> “But I will not break off My lovingkindness from him,  
Nor deal falsely in My faithfulness.

It is the strongest evident of His love when He disciplines His own.

So it is no surprise that as we study chapter 16, God’s punishment is addressed, but not without reminding the reader of His promises. It will be both sobering and uplifting to see the prophet navigate through God’s Punishment and Promises – I believe you will too.

May our God renew our love and commitment to Him, and to Him alone.

1. God’s *Punishment Illustrated* (vv. 1-9)
2. God’s *Punishment Explained* (vv. 10-18)
3. God’s *Promises Adored* (vv. 19-21)

## CONTENT

### GOD'S PUNISHMENT ILLUSTRATED (16:1-9)

God's punishment is illustrated in two *astonishing* ways:

- He is forbidden to *marry* (vv. 1-4)
- He is forbidden to mourn or feast (vv. 5-9).

This comes straight from Yahweh. Notice what we read in **v. 1** –

<sup>1</sup> **The word of Yahweh** also came to me saying,

All along, Jeremiah is giving *direct testimony* to what he has received from Yahweh. What follows may be a surprise to you concerning the prophet Jeremiah.

#### Jeremiah is forbidden to marry (vv. 1-4)

<sup>2</sup> “You shall **not take a wife** for yourself  
**nor have sons or daughters** in this place.”

He was not to marry. This is painful. The prophet Hosea if you recall was commanded to marry (cf. **Hosea 1:2**).

It was normal for any adult Hebrew male to take a wife for himself. Marriages were even arranged back then and celibacy was rare. In fact, there is not even a Hebrew word in the OT for “bachelor.”<sup>3</sup> To be commanded not to take a wife would have been a *difficult* providence.

You see marriage is “grace of life” (**1 Pet. 3:7**). It is the most precious of human relations. Married couples know the blessing, companionship, fulfillment marriage brings. What's more, marriage brings *little* blessings.

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<sup>3</sup> Cited in Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 21A, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 756.

Scripture tells us: children are “*an inheritance of Yahweh*” (Ps. 127:3). Back then, having children would allow for the inherited land in the family to be passed down to the next generation. Not only for the sake of the land, but for the sake of the family name.

Boaz used this reasoning when trying to convince the close relative of Naomi in **Ruth 4:5** –

<sup>5</sup> Then Boaz said, “On the day you acquire the field from the hand of Naomi, **you must also acquire Ruth** the Moabitess, the widow of the one who had died, **in order to raise up the name of the one who had died**, on behalf of his inheritance.”

So let the family name be carried to the next generation. That “*they may arise and recount them to their children, that they should set their confidence in God and not forget the deeds of God, but observe His commandments*” (Ps. 78:6b-7).

\*Having children is about transmitting our faith in the One True God, that they should set their confidence in no one else, but Yahweh alone!

But the prophet Jeremiah was commanded not to marry and thus NOT know the blessing of children, the grace and joy in marriage, let alone the family name to be carried on to the next generation.

Jeremiah was already accustomed to hardships and heartaches in ministry. He writes in **Jer. 15:10, 17** –

<sup>10</sup> 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.**

<sup>17</sup> I did not sit in the circle of merry-makers, Nor did I exult.  
Because of Your hand *upon me* **I sat alone,**  
For You filled me with indignation.

This was no time for marriage nor for children. *Why not?*

Notice what follows in **vv. 3-4** –

<sup>3</sup> For thus says Yahweh concerning the sons and daughters born in this place and concerning their mothers who bear them and their fathers who beget them in this land:

<sup>4</sup> “They will die **of deadly diseases**; they will not be lamented or buried; they will be as dung on the surface of the ground and come to an end **by sword and famine**, and their carcasses will become food for the birds of the sky and for the beasts of the earth.”

This was a time for punishment. The prohibition to marry was to teach the people that death was coming, whether by deadly diseases, sword or famine. Yahweh was resolved for punishment to come.

This was spoken to Jeremiah earlier in **15:2** –

<sup>2</sup> “And it will be that when they say to you, ‘Where should we go?’ then you are to tell them, ‘Thus says Yahweh: “Those *destined* for death, to death; And those *destined* for the sword, to the sword; And those *destined* for famine, to famine; And those *destined* for captivity, to captivity.”’

Death would be so pervasive that people would become calloused to it. To the living, it would be *one less to feed*. To the living, death would be more welcomed than to continue in *a living death*.

Leaving the dead bodies unburied would be regarded as a great shame and disgrace, to this day.

Here we are given the second prohibition given to the faithful messenger.

## Jeremiah is forbidden to mourn or feast (vv. 5-9)

<sup>5</sup> For thus says Yahweh, “Do not enter the house of the funeral meal, or go to lament or to console them; **for I have withdrawn** My peace from this people,” declares Yahweh, “My lovingkindness and compassion.

Here Jeremiah is denied the privilege of being a shepherd to a hurting people, to be there for the people who have experienced the death of a loved one.

It is one of the most powerful moments to show love, care, and compassion when you are beside people who mourn over the death of their loved one.

*That is why:*

This is a *dreadful* judgment: for God to *retract, take away, withdraw* His peace, His lovingkindness, and compassion! This is a *severe* punishment.

Remove God and what do you have but mere men. And even *they* will not be there to offer sympathy. Look down at **vv. 6-7** –

<sup>6</sup> “Both great men and small will die in this land; they will not be buried; they will not be **lamented**, nor will anyone gash himself or shave his head for them.

<sup>7</sup> “Men will not break *bread* in mourning for them, to comfort anyone for the dead, nor give them a cup of comforting to drink for anyone’s father or mother.

These were acts associated with the mourners and their family/friends. After the burial, friends of the mourners would prepare a meal for them, “*cup of comforting*” (v. 7) and “*funeral meal*” (v. 5).

You might recall that Ezekiel the prophet did marry yet when his wife died, he was not allowed to mourn. He was instructed by Yahweh, “*Groan silently; Make no mourning for the dead*” (Ezek 24:17). Furthermore, Ezekiel was told, “*do not eat the bread of men.*”

Jeremiah was not only forbidden to shepherd the people through times of sorrow in death but if there was any rejoicing and gladness taking place, he was not allowed to join them as well.

\*I'm telling you the greatest privilege of any shepherd is to be alongside the people of God through their highs and lows, to experience the full gamut of life and to be at their side through each turn and at every stage of life.

Look down at **vv. 8-9** –

<sup>8</sup> “Moreover you shall not go into a house of feasting to sit with them to eat and drink.”

<sup>9</sup> For thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel: “Behold, I am going to cause to cease from this place, **before your eyes and in your days**, the voice of rejoicing and the voice of gladness, the voice of the groom and the voice of the bride.

Jeremiah was to see this in his lifetime. This would be a great trial to see if the prophet would trust in Yahweh through the ensuing judgment upon the people.

But *why, oh why?* Here we are given what most of us do not have the privilege of knowing: where God explains the reason for the hard providence, why Jeremiah was to shoulder the burdens and hardships associated with his calling.

His *punishment illustrated*, now...



## GOD'S PUNISHMENT EXPLAINED (16:10-18)

<sup>10</sup> “Now when you tell this people all these words, they will say to you, **‘For what reason has Yahweh declared all this great calamity against us? And what is our iniquity, or what is our sin which we have committed against Yahweh our God?’**

That is a great question as a reader. Though it does allow us to see how *self-righteous* and *blind* the people had become.

**Calvin** went a step beyond and called it “*madness, not to examine themselves.*”<sup>4</sup> Your conscience either condemns you or comforts you. Here it shows how much the people had locked up their conscience, to not even know. They are unaware of the magnitude of their sin.

Yahweh answers in **v. 11** –

<sup>11</sup> “Then you are to say to them, **‘It is because your fathers have forsaken Me,’** declares Yahweh, **‘and have walked after other gods and served them and worshiped them; but Me they have forsaken and have not kept My law.**

This word, translated to “*forsake*” in Hebrew is ‘*āzab* and speaks of *departing/leaving or abandoning*.

Back in **1:16** –

<sup>16</sup> “I will speak My judgments on them concerning all their evil, whereby **they have forsaken Me** and have burned incense to other gods and worshiped the works of their own hands.

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<sup>4</sup> John Calvin and John Owen, *Commentaries on the Prophet Jeremiah and the Lamentations*, vol. 2 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 313.

Again in **2:19** –

<sup>19</sup> **“Your own evil will chastise you, And your acts of faithlessness will reprove you;** Know therefore and see that it is evil and bitter For you to forsake Yahweh your God, And the dread of Me is not in you,” declares Lord Yahweh of hosts.

Judah’s sin and her apostasies have brought troubles upon her. They had no one to blame but themselves. They had withdrawn themselves from the worship of God.

*Do you know what apostasy brings you? We have it in this verse: “It is evil and bitter for you to forsake the Lord your God.”* Evil and bitterness.

**Proverbs 14:14** describes it this way –

<sup>14</sup> **The backslider in heart** will have his fill of his own ways,  
But a good man will *be satisfied* with his.

*“Backslider”* is describing the heart. *“faithless, perverse, disloyal, or rebellious.”* The basic meaning of the verbal root is *“to deviate or diverge.”*<sup>5</sup>

That is what the sinful heart does: it deviates and is rebellious.

But it wasn’t just their fathers who committed this treacherous sin of apostasy. Going back to Jeremiah 16, we read in **16:12** –

<sup>12</sup> **‘You too have done evil,** *even* more than your fathers; for behold, you are each one walking according to the stubbornness of his own evil heart, without listening to Me.

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<sup>5</sup> Tremper Longman III, *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Proverbs* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006).

The evil heart is stubborn and God now declares that He would be the vindicator of His own glory by what we read in **v. 13** –

**13** ‘So **I will hurl you out of this land** into the land which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers; and there you will serve other gods day and night, for I will grant you no favor.’

There in a land which they have not known will they have their fill of idols and serve them to their hearts’ content, “*day and night.*”

This is God abandoning them to their own plight. This is a nation so bent on plummeting to the lowest of low and God not only acts as a perfect *caballero*, allowing them to go their way, but here forcefully “*hurling*” them out of the land. It is Romans chapter 1 all over again.

How heartbroken Jeremiah must have felt. We are talking about a total deportation of God’s people. What would have easily come to mind are the days of slavery in Egypt. This was a *dreadful* punishment coming.

Yet in the midst of this dreadful and sobering message, Yahweh comforts the prophet Jeremiah in **vv. 14-15** –

**14** “Therefore behold, days are coming,” declares Yahweh, “when it will no longer be said, ‘As Yahweh lives, who brought up the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt,’

**15** but, ‘As Yahweh lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had banished them.’ **For I will return them to their own land** which I gave to their fathers.

As their stay in Egypt came to a close, so would their days in the north and from all the lands where God had hurled His people.

Yahweh would again have compassion, and in His own time, He would restore them to their land.

This was also spoken of in **Jeremiah 3:15-18** –

<sup>15</sup> “Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will shepherd you on knowledge and understanding.

<sup>16</sup> “It shall be in those days when you are multiplied and fruitful in the land,” declares Yahweh, “they will no longer say, ‘The ark of the covenant of Yahweh.’ And it will not come upon the heart, nor will they remember it, nor will they miss *it*, nor will it be made again.

<sup>17</sup> “At that time they will call Jerusalem ‘The Throne of Yahweh,’ and all the nations will be gathered to it, to Jerusalem, for the name of Yahweh; nor will they walk anymore after the stubbornness of their evil heart.

<sup>18</sup> “In those days the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel, and **they will come together from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers as an inheritance.**

A time yet in the future when you will have 1) shepherds to teach them the truth; 2) His own presence on the throne in Jerusalem, not just the ark of His covenant; 3) allegiance even of Gentile nations; 4) righteousness; 5) genuineness in worship; 6) unity of both Israel (north) and Judah (south) into one kingdom; 7) reestablishment in their own Promised Land.<sup>6</sup>

But before then, there must be punishment. Look down at **16:16ff** –

<sup>16</sup> “Behold, I am going to send for many fishermen,” declares Yahweh, “and they will fish for them; and afterwards I will send for many hunters, and they will hunt them from every mountain and every hill and from the crevices of the rocks.

<sup>17</sup> “For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity concealed from My eyes.

<sup>18</sup> “I will first doubly repay their iniquity and their sin because they have profaned My land; they have filled My inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable idols and with their abominations.”

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<sup>6</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible: New American Standard Bible*. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), Je 3:15–18.

What we see here is God's omniscience at work. God knows it all. Nowhere does Scripture even hint that anything could be unknown to God. God knows everything.

Consider these portions of Scripture that testify to His omniscience:

### **2 Chronicles 16:9 –**

<sup>9</sup> “For the eyes of Yahweh move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is wholly devoted to Him. You have acted foolishly in this. Indeed, from now on you will surely have wars.”

### **Hebrews 4:13 –**

<sup>13</sup> And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are uncovered and laid bare to the eyes of Him to whom we have an account *to give*.

Even the most minor and insignificant details are known to God.

### **Matt. 10:30 –**

<sup>30</sup> “But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

Back in **Jeremiah 11:20** we read that even the most deeply concealed things are known to God.

<sup>20</sup> But, O Yahweh of hosts, who judges righteously, **Who tests the insides and the heart...**

Here in **Jeremiah 16:17** we are reminded of this amazing truth –

<sup>17</sup> “For My eyes are on all their ways;  
they are not hidden from My face,  
nor is their iniquity concealed from My eyes.

All is known to Yahweh, including our sin as **Ps. 69:5** declares –

<sup>5</sup> O God, it is You who **knows my folly,**  
And **all my guilt is not hidden from You.**

And so the Lord continues to describe the thoroughness of the depopulation. The punishment will be proportionate to the offense.

<sup>18</sup> **“I will first doubly repay their iniquity** and their sin because they have profaned My land; they have filled My inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable idols and with their abominations.”

For about 800 years, Judah been allowed to stay in the land though God did bring war, famine, epidemics, and other plagues to discipline His own. Yet a time was coming when He would “double repay” His people for their iniquity.

*What is left for a prophet to do at this point? What is the best you and I can do when faced with trouble and in the dark state of things?*

Allow me to read the lyrics of well-known praise, written in 1922 –

O soul, are you weary and troubled?  
No light in the darkness you see?  
There's light for a look at the Savior,  
And life more abundant and free!

Refrain:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in His wonderful face,  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,  
In the light of His glory and grace.

Jeremiah was born well before 1922 and did not come to know the Savior and King, the Lord Jesus but he did turn his eyes and all his thoughts to Yahweh in the midst of such pain and heartache of coming punishment!

## GOD'S PROMISES ADORED (16:19-21)

<sup>19</sup> O Yahweh, **my strength** and **my strong defense**, And **my refuge** in the day of distress, To You the nations will come From the ends of the earth and say, “Our fathers have inherited nothing but lies, Futility and things of no profit.”

Here Jeremiah praises Yahweh and Yahweh will answer in v. 21.

### Jeremiah praises Yahweh (vv. 19-20)

Jeremiah calls Yahweh his *strength*, his *strong defense* and then adds “*my refuge in the day of distress*.”

His confidence is not in his circumstances. His confidence is not in people. His confidence is not with himself. It is in Yahweh alone.

This echoes what David writes in **Psalm 37:39-40** –

<sup>39</sup> But the salvation of the righteous is from Yahweh;  
**He is their strength in time of distress.**

<sup>40</sup> Yahweh helps them and protects them; He protects them from the wicked and saves them, Because they take refuge in Him.

This does not mean we escape *the time of distress*. Rather, it reminds the righteous that in Yahweh we find our strength. The time of distress drives the righteous to their strong Helper who rejoices to be their refuge.

The Lord here is sustaining Jeremiah and that is such an encouragement to the pilgrim who sees such dark days of distress.

But there's more praise offered to the Lord. Notice the rest of **v. 19** –

**19** ... To You the nations will come From the ends of the earth and say, “Our fathers have inherited nothing but **lies, Futility and things of no profit.**”

Jeremiah turns to what will be fulfilled after God's punishment of His people: the nation will come and adore the One True God.

This promise was introduced to us back in **3:17** –

**17** “At that time they will call Jerusalem ‘The Throne of Yahweh,’ and **all the nations will be gathered to it**, to Jerusalem, for the name of Yahweh; nor will they walk anymore after the stubbornness of their evil heart.

Part of it was fulfilled when the Jews returned from Babylon and idolatry was renounced and many Gentiles turned to God. But the future fulfillment lies in the final restoration of Israel in the millennial kingdom.

Isaiah writes in **Isaiah 2:2-3** –

**2** Now it will be that In the last days The mountain of the house of Yahweh Will be established as the head of the mountains, And will be lifted up above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it.

**3** And **many peoples will come and say**, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, To the house of the God of Jacob, That He may instruct us from His ways And that we may walk in His paths.” For from Zion the law will go forth And the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem.

God will one day open the eyes of many peoples and they will see the folly of idolatry. They will realize that all that they have inherited was nothing but lies and Truth is to be found in the One True God, Yahweh.



Going back to Jeremiah. They will ask themselves what we read in **16:20** –

<sup>20</sup> Can man make gods for himself? Yet they are not gods!

“How could we be so senseless to think idols that we have made are gods? They are not gods!”

Jeremiah not only praises the Lord for who He is, the source of our strength and the One whom we seek our help from, the One whom becomes our refuge in the day of distress, but he praises Yahweh for what He has promised. This is not the end. The scattering of His people will bring the nations.

### Yahweh answers Jeremiah (v. 21)

<sup>21</sup> “Therefore behold, **I am going to make them know**— This time I will make them know My power and My might; And they shall know that My name is Yahweh.”

Yahweh speaks and promises, *I am going to make them know.*

So much attention was given to mighty hand of God in the bringing the people of out Egypt and rightfully so, but there is more to be seen in God’s power and might.

It would be seen in the punishment of His people. He would show them His power and might in their ruin. Yet it will show them what they had refused to believe and live out all along: Yahweh is His name!

God would humble His people. God would bring punishment to cause them to know Him, to know both His power and might, that He alone is Yahweh.

Earlier we read in **Jer. 9:23-24** –

<sup>23</sup> Thus says Yahweh, “Let not a wise man boast in his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast in his might; let not a rich man boast in his riches,

<sup>24</sup> but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am Yahweh who shows lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares Yahweh.

Life is about knowing Yahweh! God in His might and power is determined to cause His people to know Him.

As Yahweh, He is ever present. He does not change. He alone is Redeemer, the Eternal One, the Life Giver, and the supreme Judge of all creation.

Even in His judgment, God has a plan. He always has a plan.

## C O N C L U S I O N

My beloved, believers never need to fear facing God’s wrath, but they will face God’s fatherly disapproval and correction when they sin.

Judah had forsaken the Lord, not only repeatedly but for so long. God’s punishment must come, yet in God’s kindness, God would make His Name known among the Nations.

Jesus reminded His disciples in **John 10:14-16** –

<sup>14</sup> “I am the good shepherd,  
and I know My own and My own know Me,

<sup>15</sup> even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father;  
and I lay down My life for the sheep.

<sup>16</sup> **“And I have other sheep,** which are not from this fold;  
I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice;  
and they will become one flock *with* one shepherd.

Praise be to God that He has other sheep that He must bring.  
One day will become one flock with one shepherd.

Till that day comes, we must be the faithful messengers as Jeremiah was in his day. Whatever hard providences God has ordained that we go through, we must be faithful to our calling to be His witnesses not only of His coming judgment but of His glorious promises.

Let us pray.