

Series: Questions

Title: Seekest Thou Great Things (for Thyself)

Text: Jer 45: 1-5

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Place: SGBC, NJ

Jeremiah 45: 1: The word that Jeremiah the prophet spake unto Baruch the son of Neriah, when he had written these words in a book at the mouth of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah,

This prophecy is placed after the destruction of Jerusalem and dispersion of the Jews. But it was delivered long before, in the fourth year of king Jehoiakim. Back in chapter 36, Jeremiah was in jail for preaching God's word. So as the LORD gave Jeremiah the word, Jeremiah gave the word to his young scribe, Baruch, who wrote it in a book or scroll.

Since Jeremiah was in jail he could not deliver the LORD's word to the people. Therefore, Jeremiah sent Baruch to read the words to all the people. It was before a massive crowd gathered at Jerusalem for a day of fasting. You can imagine the thoughts of this young, ambitious scribe. He is like any young ambitious preacher or servant overcome by his fleshly thoughts. He would get to stand before the largest crowd he had ever spoken before. Baruch was thinking they would all admire his speaking ability and hold him in high regard.

But the prophecy told of all the evil God would bring upon Israel and Judah, using Babylon to destroy the country. Therefore, being offended at the truth of God, instead of holding Baruch in high honor, men took the book from Baruch and delivered it to Jehoiakim, king of Judah. After reading it, the king demanded Baruch be apprehended and put in jail. But the Lord preserved Baruch before they executed him so that he escaped.

Then the LORD gave Jeremiah his word again. This time God promised that Jehoiakim would have "no son to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost." (Jer 36:30) So Jeremiah is telling Baruch what to write as the LORD gives him the word. As Baruch writes this new prophecy, which is even more terrible than the first, he knows he will be the one who has to deliver it to the king. Therefore, God gives a word personally to Baruch himself, which makes up our text.

Brethren, the LORD's word sometimes does what it did to Baruch: it reveals our sin to us, rebukes and reproves us and is hard to hear. But before being offended, we should remember what love and condescension for the God of the universe to send a word just for me! The Lord only chastens those he loves. And he chastens us so that we will not be destroyed with this evil world but continue to partake of Christ our Holiness (1 Cor 11: 31-32). For that, rather than being offended, we should thank the Lord.

Divisions: 1) The LORD reveals Baruch's heart 2) God's reproof 3) God's promise

Our subject is another question which God asked a sinner: Seekest Thou Great Things For Thyself?

THE LORD REVEALS BARUCH'S HEART

Jeremiah 45: 2: Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, unto thee, O Baruch; 3: Thou didst say, Woe is me now! for the LORD hath added grief to my sorrow; I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest.

Baruch was a good scribe. He was an elect child of God. Baruch was one for whom Christ entered covenant to save. Yet, in his sinful flesh he was ambitious and full of pride. Here is the good news, we see in God's dealing with Baruch that God knows the thoughts and intents of our heart.

Jeremiah 17: 9: The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

The Lord saw in Baruch's heart what Baruch did not see himself. He saw immoderate desires for great things. God saw a purpose inconsistent with God's purposes. He saw what was unprofitable for Baruch's own soul. Baruch was seeking great things for himself in the ministry. He imagined how everyone would receive the LORD's word and praise him for his capable delivery. This young scribe imagined being promoted from scribe to prophet. He imagined recognition and honor and applause.

Brethren, knowing a little that my sinful heart is *deceitful above all things* so that I cannot even know it, it is a great blessing to know that God discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Instead, of receiving the great things he sought, the LORD's message was so offensive that it brought him rejection and trouble. Then in his heart, Baruch murmured against God, saying, "*Woe is me now!*" He was saying, "I don't deserve this." Instead of the pleasure of honor and applause, the LORD gave Baruch wave upon wave of grief and sorrow. In his heart, Baruch complained, "*the LORD hath added grief to my sorrow.*" He did not feel the LORD was treating him as he ought to be treated. Baruch imagined being praised for his great strength and his great faith. But after a little trouble, in his heart he complained, "*I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest.*" His problem was that Baruch was looking for strength and rest in himself and in this world rather than Christ.

Brethren, being the servants of “the Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief” do we expect not to experience sorrow and grief like our Master? We can be sure, the more God uses us in his service, the more we shall be “men of sorrows, acquainted with grief” (Is 53: 3). Our Master said, “The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you” (Jn 15:20). Christ told us that if we would follow him then we must take up our cross. A cross is painful. Bearing someone’s burden is painful. With great use comes great grief.

But in Baruch we see the total sinfulness of our flesh. The result of our fall is that our sinful nature is proud and ambitious. Our sinful flesh murmurs against God’s hand of providence. In our flesh we seek strength and rest in ourselves and the world rather than Christ.

Brethren, every child of God has sinful, ambitious, proud thoughts about self, either in our occupations or in the church or in our families or all of these. But that is only our sinful flesh. It is sad but true that even though we experience the hatred of this world toward Christ, at times we have fleshly ambition to be esteemed even by those we know to be enemies of God. But the Lord will never let his child be admired by a world dead in sin. Christ said, “Ye shall be hated of all men for My names sake”—and it is a blessing from our Lord that it is so (Mt 10: 22)! For his minister, after each sermon, the Lord will make him fall on his face with shame for being proud of the message that God himself gave, enabled him to preach and blessed to his people. Our sinful heart lusts for what God hates.

1 John 2: 16: For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Therefore, God’s purpose in sending trials is to keep his saints from finding strength in ourselves and rest in this world, only in Christ. Baruch complained of *fainting* because he was looking for strength in his flesh. But God will not let his child forget that our strength is Christ alone. With Christ we can do all things; without Christ we can do nothing. So God sends trials to keep us knowing that we have no strength in our flesh, only in Christ.

Our rest is Christ alone. Rest for our souls is the rest of being complete in Christ: completely justified by his righteousness, completely sanctified by his holiness, completely redeemed from the curse of the law by Christ bearing the curse of the law for us. We have the rest of full acceptance with God in Christ. Every believer has the rest of knowing Christ’s blood is sufficient to save all God’s elect, without our works, and nothing needs to be added to Christ. We are accepted in the Beloved! Therefore, God gives his child exactly what we need to keep us exactly where we need to be. Knowing this, we pray with Solomon,

Proverbs 30: 8: Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: 9: Lest I be full, and deny *thee*, and say, Who *is* the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God *in vain*.

GOD’S REPROOF

Jeremiah 45: 4: Thus shalt thou say unto him, The LORD saith thus; Behold, *that* which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land. 5: And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek *them* not:

Baruch knew that God is the sovereign over all. He knew that if it is built, God built it; if planted, God planted it. And Baruch knew God has the right to do with his own what he will. Thankfully, under the covenant of grace, God will never break down that church he built. He will never pluck up that child he planted.

But Baruch knew that due to their sin in breaking the covenant of works, that God was breaking down and plucking up, *the whole land* of Israel and Judah. That is why God asks this rhetorical question, “*And seekest thou great things for thyself?*” It is to say, “Knowing I am destroying this land, seekest thou great things for thyself in this land? Seek them not!”

The Lord is determined that His people shall not have great things for ourselves in this life. He has purposed to pour contempt upon all the pride of man, including his people. Why? Please hear this! God is breaking down and pulling up this entire heaven and earth! God shall burn it all up due to the sin of this world and nothing shall remain. Christ Jesus, by his righteousness, is making a new heaven and a new earth, made up of those he redeemed. Therefore, we have no continuing city here, our home is in the heavens. So how absurd for us to seek great things for ourselves here!

2 Peter 3: 10: But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. 11: *Seeing* then *that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, 12: Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? 13: Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. 14: Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. 15: And account *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you.

Brethren, this place is not our home. We have a home eternal in the heavens.

2 Corinthians 4: 17: For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory; 18: While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal. 5: 1: For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Believer, when God brings our ambitions to nothing, the reason we are troubled is because we set our fleshly hearts too much on this world. The frowns of the world would not hurt us, if we did not covet its smiles.

My grandfather and grandmother never had much of this world—no great career, no riches, no honors. But they had Christ. Therefore, they had contentment with having little of this world because they had everything in Christ.

Colossians 3: 1: If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2: Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. 3: For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. 4: When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. 5: Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth

GOD'S COMFORT

Jeremiah 45: 5...for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD: But thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.

With reproof, God gives Baruch, and us, great comfort.

God shall bring evil upon all flesh—that is, judgment, trouble, distress due to our sin. All have sinned. In the great day of God's judgment, all without Christ, shall die under the justice of God. No sinner outside of Christ shall escape the judgment of God—"*for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD.*"

Yet, since Christ has born the judgment of his people and made us righteous, since we are risen with him, not one of his blood-bought children shall perish!—"But thy life [thy soul] will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest."

Believer, for the sake of Christ, for his righteousness sake, God shall spare your life and your soul. "For a prey" means you will experience tribulation in this world to keep you humbled at Christ's feet. But God promises to save our life and soul "*in all places whither thou goest.*"—throughout this life and in death.

God promises his child that you will not be great in this world, but you will be safe!

The only hope for sinners is Christ. Cast your entire care into his hands. Do not seek great things in this world; it shall soon be destroyed; seek Christ while he may be found! What greater title and honor could we possess than being called "a child of God?" What greater riches than the "unsearchable riches of Christ?" What greater security than God's promise to deliver our life and our soul wherever we go?

I am a sinner. I hate it! But I tell you what I am more afraid of than my sin. God said the publicans and harlots would enter the kingdom of God before the self-righteous and proud and rich men of this world. Riches and honor and applause frighten me more than any other sin.

Mark 4:19: the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

Matthew 16:26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Matthew 6: 31: Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?...33: But seek ye first [preeminently all the time] the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Amen!