Jeremiah 15:19-21 19Therefore this is what the Lord says: “If you repent, I will take you back, so that you may stand before me. If you say what is valuable, and not what is worthless, you will be my spokesman. Let them turn to you, but you must not turn to them. 20I will make you a bronze wall to this people. They will fight against you, but they will not overcome you, because I am with you to save you and to rescue you, declares the Lord. 21I will rescue you from the hand of the wicked, and I will deliver you from the grasp of the violent.”

I have to tell you, the words of this text just jumped out at me. They especially jumped out at me because I am very much aware of what is going on in the world. Our world has turned aside from the Lord. Our world has determined that Christian ways and Christian ideas are evil, unloving and destructive to our nation. This movement has been going on for quite some time now. For instance, I found this statement in a sermon that I wrote I think back in 1998. It said, “We need to deal with people in God’s Way and through God’s Word. To try and deal with people in any other way will only lead to confusion and frustration. You can see the truth of that just by realizing that our country is torn between a conservative and a liberal point of view when dealing with people. No one can decide what is right and wrong. Now one can decide what is good or bad. The end result of this confusion is some of the very problems our country is going through now.”

Honestly, I don’t remember the specific problems we were facing as a nation in 1998 but what I can tell you is that my words then are all the more true today. We have cities where lawlessness is allowed to rule. We have a government that doesn’t seem to want to stop crime and injustice. Almost every week there are news stories of mass robberies, where a gang of people enter a store and simply loot it. Nobody gets arrested. I watched an attempted robbery of a jewelry store and I say, “attempted” because the owners of the store fought this guy even though he was spraying them down with bear spray, a type of pepper spray. They fought him off, there are clear pictures of the man and yet now a week later, no one has been arrested. It is clear that our world is becoming more and more lawless and pretty soon I wonder where will it be safe to go?

Our country has been on a trend for quite a few years that goes against the simple issues of common sense. Just ask yourself, since 1998 have things gotten better or have they been trending slowly to the worse? And what shall we do? Truthfully, I am not sure there is anything we can do, at least not when it comes to specifically fixing all that is going wrong out there. Besides, it is not my job to tell you how to change the country or how to become a political activist. My job is to direct you to God’s Word. My job is to make sure you and your souls, that you and your families are hearing, believing and standing on the truth and wonder of God’s Word. But I am going to tell you, that job, that job of standing firm in the Lord is an extremely tough one. It was a tough job back in Jeremiah’s day and it is still a tough one today. Our theme will be: **SAY WHAT IS VALUABLE, NOT WHAT IS WORTHLESS!**

What I will tell you is that Jeremiah lived at a rather tough time for those who desired to be believers. A little history. The kingdom of the Jews had been divided into the Southern Kingdom of Judah, where faithfulness to God was better and the Northern Kingdom of Israel where faithfulness to God was pretty much nonexistent. Already, that Northern Kingdom has been carried away into oblivion by the Assyrian nation. This happened some 100 years before Jeremiah. The problem is that Judah, the remaining kingdom, is now also, almost completely turned away from the Lord. They learned nothing as their northern family was carried off in an act of total justice by the Lord. Called upon to repent the people of Israel did not. Now Judah faces a similar fate. God has made it clear that without repentance, without a return to his Word and way, the people of Judah will also face a day of judgment and destruction. It is to these unrepentant people that Jeremiah is sent. Sent to preach God’s Word. Sent to speak the truth and call for repentance. I think you can see how it is going.

Listen, because the opening words of this text is really Jeremiah complaining. Let me just highlight those words of complaint. Jeremiah says, **“Lord, you understand. Remember me and care for me. Take vengeance for me on those who persecute me. You are slow to anger. Do not take me away. Be mindful that I bear reproach for your sake…Why is my pain unending and my wound incurable, refusing to heal? Will you be like a deceptive brook to me, like a spring that dries up?”** Those words make it quite clear that Jeremiah’s life is very tough. As you glance through his book you will find that he is beaten, imprisoned, and later, thrown into a cistern to die. There is no doubt that Jeremiah’s life as a prophet of God is very difficult.

Yet Jeremiah works at doing what is right. He turns to the Lord for help and guidance which is what one would expect from a prophet of God. The problem is that Jeremiah goes too far in his complaint. Jeremiah says, **“Will you be like a deceptive brook to me, like a spring that dries up?”**

Yeah, Jeremiah expresses the fear that God will not be with him, will not be his help and strength. Honestly, I thank God for Jeremiah. There have been many times when I wondered if the stress and strains of preaching and teaching God’s Word were worth it. Times when I doubted, when I wondered if the position I took upon God’s Word was the best and for the good of the people. I had trouble because there were times when there was a backlash, members of my own congregation who bad mouthed and attacked me for speaking the truth of God, sometimes there was backlash for just being a human who has faults, who might get his shoes on the wrong feet. But this isn’t just something that a Pastor endures. The truth of the matter is that each one of us has faced various trials simply because of our faith. Where family or friends speak against you, ridicule you or maybe they just laugh that you are so foolish as to still believe and hope in God. You know the stress and strain of being faithful. This is why I thank God for Jeremiah. Jeremiah is struggling, stressing, being distressed because of his faith and trust in God and Jeremiah pleads with the Lord. He goes too far in his complaint, but then, so often that is the struggle and fight of faith that all of us have indeed faced!

The Lord’s response is what all of us need to hear and take to heart. The Lord starts this way, **“Therefore this is what the Lord says, ‘If you repent, I will take you back, so that you may stand before me. If you say what is valuable, and not what is worthless, you will be my spokesman.”**

The Lord calls for Jeremiah, and in truth, every one of us, to repent. To stop thinking contrary to his Word and his Way. Turn you mind away, Jeremiah, turn your mind away from being foolish. Such is what the plea for repentance is. I personally like the next words, because the next words just lay it all out very clearly: **“If you say what is valuable, and not what is worthless, you will be my spokesman.”** There is a truth for all of us to hear. Make sure your words are words of the Lord, for the Lord, to the Lord, and are valuable words. Make sure they reflect the truth and marvel of God, His truth, not what you think or imagine, but His truth as it is clearly laid forth in his Holy Word. Only with the wonder and value of God’s truth will you and I be able to stand before Him. Please note that. This is always to be the issue before us. Not can we stand before our fellow humans, not do we look good to the world, but can we stand before the presence of the Lord! Stand because of the value and worthiness of God’s Holy and awesome word!

Listen to what the Lord says, **“Let them turn to you, but you must not turn to them. I will make you a bronze wall to this people. They will fight against you, but they will not overcome you, because I am with you to save you and to rescue you, declares the Lord. I will rescue you from the hand of the wicked, and I will deliver you from the grasp of the violent.”**

What great words of hope and promise! The Lord says, “Hold your ground. You don’t have to chase after these godless people. Hold your ground and let them turn, let them come to you. And then the Lord tells us how he will strengthen Jeremiah. You will be a bronze wall. I can tell you there were no explosives or bullets in those days. The bronze wall represented the strongest defense there was. Jeremiah, they are going to hurl things at you, but those insults, those attacks will be pretty worthless. I will tell you, I think the Lord will give all of us this same type of strength to endure. He will do it, especially when we need it. It is just one of the blessings of the Lord.

But the greatest of the promises here is this line: **I am with you to save you and to rescue you.”** Those words remind us of the great promises that Jesus uttered for us too. Jesus said, **“I am with you always.”** We don’t have to be worried that God will abandon or desert. Stick to His Word and He is always with us. By the way, I speak in this way because I want you to grasp that in Jesus we are covered with beautiful and strong armor. But every time we reject his Word or doubt his wisdom or decide we know better than the Lord that is just like us taking off and throwing God’s armor to the corner. We can turn from God but God will never turn from us.

Jesus says to us: **“We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God.”** And again, **“If God is for us, who can be against us?...Christ Jesus who died, more than that, was raised to life, is the one who is at God’s right hand and who is also interceding for us!”** And again Jesus says, **“No testing has overtaken you except ordinary testing. But God is faithful. He will not allow you to be tested beyond your ability, but when he tests you, he will also bring about the outcome that you are able to bear it.”** Seriously, if we just stop there, don’t we grasp and understand the awesome joy and wonder our Savior is for us? There is literally nothing for us to fear.

And the biggest reason for nothing to fear is because of the promise of Jesus. God has promised and God has sent the Savior Jesus into our world. Jesus, of the love of God in every way, endured the cross, suffered our shame, bore our grief and woe all for the sake to offering us eternal life and salvation. Jesus has served as the atoning sacrifice for our sins, indeed for the sins of the whole world. Because of Jesus and the gift of faith that is given us through the Holy Spirit, the promise of eternal rescue and salvation is ours. The issue is faith and trust in Jesus. The issue is to be impacted by this awesome gift of eternal life. Again I say that because every great and wonderful thing that comes into our lives has an impact. If you would agree that the gift of a million dollars would impact your life, then why would you doubt that the unlimited treasure of Jesus will also have an impact? In Jesus our lives are changed. We are not talking become holy and perfect we are just talking being the sinner who clings to Jesus for the wonder of salvation. But if this application doesn’t grab you how about this one. You are lost in an ocean of water and are going to drown. Jesus throws you a simple life ring. Nothing spectacular in that ring, nothing earth shaking there, but the truth of the matter is in that situation that life ring is a life changing thing! That’s what we are talking about. The life given in Jesus! The implications and promises of Jesus are far reaching and life altering.

How gracious the Lord is to Jeremiah! How gracious he is to us. I wish I could say that Jeremiah’s life from this point on is a piece of cake, but it is not. He will still suffer persecution and great difficulty as a Prophet of the Lord. But what I can tell you is that Jeremiah is ultimately rescued and saved by the Lord. He will endure. He will stay faithful and sure to the Lord. And one of the sure ways to know that is to just grasp that we still look at, think about and marvel at what God gave to us in Jeremiah and the prophetic book that bears his name. What God promised, came true.

The same will be true for us. We may still struggle. We may still have our doubts and moments of stress just because of Jesus. But in the end, we know that there is nothing to be worried about. The Lord is with us. Jesus has redeemed us. We have the faith the Holy Spirit has called us to. Let us learn to cling to the Lord as Jeremiah was taught. Amen.