

Peace through Punishment

(Jeremiah 46:25-28)

Yearly Theme: “Peace is...”

Series Title: “The Wisdom of Peace”

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Something to think about:

If GOD didn’t deal in the realm of justice, what kind of GOD would He be? Not only is GOD a GOD of love, He is also a GOD of justice. I would also contend that without justice, GOD would not be a GOD of love; His justice and love are both sides of the same coin.

Today, we continue in the Old Testament book of Jeremiah, and we come to a passage in chapter 46 that explains this idea of justice very well. This short passage is nestled in a series of chapters dealing with GOD’s judgment/punishment of the nations of the world (at least the world surrounding Judah at that time). These nations given warning by GOD were Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Kedar, Hazor, Elam, and ultimately Babylon. In the middle of all of these warnings, is a word of encouragement for GOD’s people. Let’s take a look...

Jeremiah 46:25-28 (NLT),

²⁵ The LORD of Heaven’s Armies, the God of Israel, says: “I will punish Amon, the god of Thebes, and all the other gods of Egypt. I will punish its rulers and Pharaoh, too, and all who trust in him.

²⁶ I will hand them over to those who want them killed—to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and his army. But afterward the land will recover from the ravages of war. I, the LORD, have spoken!

²⁷ “But do not be afraid, Jacob, my servant; do not be dismayed, Israel.

For I will bring you home again from distant lands, and your children will return from their exile.

Israel will return to a life of peace and quiet, and no one will terrorize them.

²⁸ Do not be afraid, Jacob, my servant, for I am with you,” says the LORD.

“I will completely destroy the nations to which I have exiled you, but I will not completely destroy you.

I will discipline you, but with justice; I cannot let you go unpunished.” ¹

So, what do we make of these few verses today amidst all the warning of judgment of the nations?

Key Point: “Peace is not necessarily devoid of punishment, but can come as a result of it.”

Here’s a few things we can learn about the nature of GOD through His judgment and punishment:

- GOD is a GOD of the whole world.

Jeremiah 46:25-26 (NLT), ²⁵ The LORD of Heaven’s Armies, the God of Israel, says: “I will punish Amon, the god of Thebes, and all the other gods of Egypt. I will punish its rulers and Pharaoh, too,

and all who trust in him. ²⁶ I will hand them over to those who want them killed—to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and his army. But afterward the land will recover from the ravages of war. I, the LORD, have spoken!

- The only true ally we have is GOD.

Jeremiah 46:27 (NLT), ²⁷ “But do not be afraid, Jacob, my servant; do not be dismayed, Israel. For I will bring you home again from distant lands, and your children will return from their exile. Israel will return to a life of peace and quiet, and no one will terrorize them.

- GOD disciplines His people through justice.

Jeremiah 46:28 (NLT), ²⁸ Do not be afraid, Jacob, my servant, for I am with you,” says the LORD. “I will completely destroy the nations to which I have exiled you, but I will not completely destroy you. I will discipline you, but with justice; I cannot let you go unpunished.”

Something to take home:

GOD’s punishment isn’t to harm us, but rather to bring us to a place of understanding. Its purpose is to clearly define the truth and the consequences of our rejection of it. When we reject GOD (thereby rejecting truth) we are ultimately doomed to reap what we sow.

What are you sowing today? For that matter, what are you doing with your life?

When we’re punished, rather than saying, “Why GOD?” we should remember that His discipline is because of His love for us. The author of Proverbs in the Old Testament reminds us...

Proverbs 3:11-12 (NLT), ¹¹ My child, don’t reject the LORD’s discipline, and don’t be upset when he corrects you. ¹² For the LORD corrects those he loves, just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights.

And the author of Hebrews goes even further when he writes,

Hebrews 12:7-13 (NLT), ⁷ As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? ⁸ If God doesn’t discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all. ⁹ Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn’t we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever? ¹⁰ For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God’s discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness. ¹¹ No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it’s painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way. ¹² So take a new grip with your tired hands and strengthen your weak knees. ¹³ Mark out a straight path for your feet so that those who are weak and lame will not fall but become strong.

We can have peace in knowing that our punishment is only for a season, and it is meant to bring us peace by purging us of that which is improperly aligned with GOD’s purposes for us.

Key Point: “Peace is not necessarily devoid of punishment, but can come as a result of it.”