

THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF JEREMIAH
V. Handling Spiritual Opposition From Close Associates
(Jeremiah 11:18-12:6)

I. Introduction

- A. God called Jeremiah to minister in Judah during its spiritual decline until God's judgment fell on the nation. Jeremiah's spiritual ministry is then similar to what God's servants face in our era of spiritual decline.
- B. We thus view Jeremiah 11:18-12:6 on Jeremiah's handling of spiritual opposition from close associates for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

II. Handling Spiritual Opposition From Close Associates, Jeremiah 11:18-12:6.

- A. Jeremiah faced intense spiritual opposition from his townspeople, Jeremiah 11:18-19:
 - 1. The Lord revealed a plot against Jeremiah by the people of his hometown of Anathoth, Jer. 1:1; 11:18, 21.
 - 2. This plot involved the plan to kill Jeremiah that his prophecies might cease with his death, Jer. 11:19b.
 - 3. Had God not informed Jeremiah about the plot, he would have been like an unsuspecting, vulnerable, gentle lamb being led to the slaughter, Jeremiah 11:19a.
- B. In response to this revelation, Jeremiah asked the Lord to avenge him of his townspeople (Jer. 1:20), and the Lord replied that He would repay them, for they countered His will for Jeremiah's ministry, Jer. 11:21-23:
 - 1. The men of Anathoth had threatened to kill Jeremiah, ordering him not to prophesy in God's name, v. 21.
 - 2. However, their order countered God's will: When the Lord called Jeremiah's into the ministry, He had touched Jeremiah's mouth with His hand to assure him that God had put His words in his mouth, Jer. 1:9.
 - 3. Since the order of the men of Anathoth to Jeremiah countered God's will, their plan to stop his prophetic ministry was countered by the Lord in fulfillment of God's promise to protect Jeremiah in Jeremiah 1:17-19: God said that Anathoth's young men would die by the sword, their sons and daughters would die by famine, and they would have no remnant, for God would annihilate all the conspirators! (Jer. 11:22-23)
- C. However, Jeremiah also faced unknown, intense spiritual opposition from his own family, Jeremiah 12:1-6:
 - 1. In Jeremiah 12:1-4, God's prophet reacted to the Lord's revelation of his townspeople's plot against his life by complaining about the prosperity of the wicked men of Anathoth, Bib. Know. Com., O. T., p. 1144.
 - a. Though acknowledging that God was righteous when he brought his case to the Lord for vengeance, Jeremiah questioned God's justice in allowing the wicked men of Anathoth even to prosper, Jer. 12:1.
 - b. The wicked and faithless men of Anathoth seemed secure and established in life though they spoke about the Lord with their mouths while He was far from their hearts, Jeremiah 12:2.
 - c. Since the Lord knew Jeremiah's righteous heart (Jeremiah 12:3a), he asked God to drag off the wicked men of Anathoth like sheep to be butchered, to set them apart for the day of slaughter, Jeremiah 12:3b.
 - d. Jeremiah asked how long would the land lie parched by God's judgment of a drought even though the wicked refused to repent, Jeremiah 12:4a,b.
 - e. Besides, the wicked men callously believed that "God was indifferent to their sin," Jeremiah 12:4c.
 - 2. God replied to Jeremiah's complaint in a surprising way, stating that if Jeremiah "found his current circumstances difficult, his future situation would be even worse," Jeremiah 12:5; Ibid., p. 1145. To illustrate, the Lord used two metaphors – "a race and a cross-country walk," Ibid.:
 - a. If Jeremiah had become worn out racing with men on foot, how could he compete with horses?
 - b. If he had stumbled in a safe country, how would he manage in the bushy thickets by the Jordan River?
 - 3. To explain, God informed Jeremiah that even his relatives, including members of his own family, had betrayed him, raising a loud cry against him in joining with the plot of the townspeople to kill him.
 - 4. Thus, Jeremiah was not to trust them even though they spoke well of him to his face, Jeremiah 12:6!

Lesson: *When obeying God's calling brought Jeremiah into conflict with his townspeople and even his relatives and family, Jeremiah was to rely on God to render justice for him and to continue to remain faithful to the Lord in His calling. Jeremiah was to avoid entrusting himself even to relatives and family members, for his fellowship with God limited his circle of fellowship with other people only to those who were truly upright with the Lord.*

Application: *(1) In today's world, may we rely on God for fellowship and be cautious about fellowshipping even with relatives, for only if people are right with God is it spiritually safe to fellowship with them. (1 Timothy 5:22) (2) In view of such needed caution today about relationships, may we closely heed God's Biblical guidance in all realms of life that we might align with His will to enjoy His protective help in our relationships with others.*