

Jer. 18:19-23: Taking Refuge in God
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Overview

1. Setting in the chapter:
 - a) The Lord gives the people a chance to repent, illustrated by the potter.
 - b) The people reject that opportunity, and focus their hatred on Jer., the Lord's messenger.
 - c) Now Jer. must deal with their opposition to him personally.
2. Inner structure:
 - a) He turns to the Lord,
 - b) and twice prays the same prayer (alternation):
 - 1) Men oppose me.
 - 2) You know my innocence and their wickedness.
 - 3) So you should vindicate my cause.
3. The basic theme is thus one that we have encountered before in Jer: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." Not just an OT theme; one that appears in the NT as well. If we do not have occasion to draw on it very often, perhaps it's because we do not speak as forthrightly as we should with people about their sin and the Lord's offer of salvation.

A. 19, Appeal to God

He does not enter into personal conflict with them; that would only sully his position. He is called to be a prophet of God; he must not give them cause to charge him with serving his own ends. So he casts his burden on the Lord.

"Them that contend with me:" those who raise a *rib*, a lawsuit, against me. Their opposition actually does take legal form later in the book. Jer. is seeking the Lord's defense in this. The same sentiment, that the Lord must be his people's refuge when they are accused, appears also in Isa. 49:25 and Ps. 35:1.

B. 20-22a, First Panel

1. 20a, Their sin: repay Jer. evil for good, by setting a trap for him. V.18 shows them setting the trap. What we ought not to miss is that the work that they thus reward is here called "good." Jer. has been doing them a favor in warning them of their sin.

Application: The world hates to hear of its sin, and indeed, if we point out that sin in a proud or self-justifying way, we are condemned. But it is the greatest favor we can do to unbelievers to warn them of their sin and of God's coming judgment, so that they can be saved from it.

2. 20b, God knows: another side of the "good" for which they repay Jer. evil. Jer. interceded for them. Recall 14:7-9, 19-22.

Application: This is a real test of whether our witness against men's sins is based in pride or love: do we back it up with prayer for God to have mercy on them?

3. 21-22a, Imprecation: emphasis on physical judgment, the particular trials of the coming invasion. Note temporal clause at the end.

Compare 6:11,12. This is just asking that God will bring the judgment that he has already promised. "Lord, they clearly have not repented; let your judgment fall." Very different from personal vindictiveness on Jer's part.

C. 22b-23, Second Panel

1. 22b, Their sin: much the same as 20a. They have dug a pit and hidden snares to catch him unawares.
2. 23a, God knows: their deliberate counsel against him. God knows their motives, that this is not just coincidental.
3. 23b, Imprecation: emphasis on spiritual judgment, the guilt of their sin. Note again temporal clause at the end. Reckon them as guilty against your law.

D. Theology of Imprecation

1. Leave it to God, Deut. 32:35, cf. Rom. 12:19
2. We must be identified with him, cf. Jer. 15:15-17
3. Based on his revelation, cf. vv. 21-22 here.
4. NT exx:
 - a) 2 Tim. 4:14, Alexander the coppersmith
 - b) 2 Thess. 1:6ff
 - c) Acts 23:3 "God shall smite thee"

Psalm: 34--God's vindication of his children

Analysis

18:19-23 Jer. asks the Lord to judge his enemies. Awareness quote p.

1. AQ f: coordinate p
 - a) 19 HAQ:\$IYBFH Y:HWFH)"L/FY
 - b) W./\$:MA(L:/QOWL Y:RIYBFY
2. AQ: alternation: their deeds vs. Jer; God's knowledge; imprecation.

a) First Panel

- 1) What they did: (dig a pit for Jer.)
 - a> 20 HA/Y:\$UL.AM T.AXAT-+OWBFH RF(FH
 - b> K.IY-KFRW. \$W.XFH L:/NAP:\$/IY
- 2) quote p: Remember how I interceded for them.
 - a> quote f: Z:KOR
 - b> quote: purpose p
 - 1> text: (FM:D/IY L:/PFNEY/KF
 - 2> purpose:
 - a: L:/DAB."R (:AL"Y/HEM +OWBFH
 - b: L:/HF\$IYB)ET-X:AMFT/:KF M"/HEM
- 3) imprecation (physical judgment, ending with temporal p)
 - a> 21 LF/K"N T."N)ET-B.:N"Y/HEM LF/RF(FB
 - b> W:/HAG.IR/"M (AL-Y:D"Y-XEREB
 - c> W:/TIH:YENFH N:\$"Y/HEM \$AK.ULOWT W:/)AL:MFNOWT
 - d> W:/)AN:\$"Y/HEM YIH:YW. H:ARUG"Y MFWET
 - e> B.AXW.R"Y/HEM MUK."Y-XEREB B.A/M.II:XFMFH
 - f> temporal p
 - 1> text: 22 T.I\$.FMA(Z:(FQFH MI/B.FT."Y/HEM
 - 2> time: K.IY-TFBIY) (:AL"Y/HEM G.:DW.D P.IT:)OM

b) Second Panel

- 1) What they did: (dig a pit for Jer)
 - a> K.IY-KFRW. {\$IYXFH} [\$W.XFH] L:/LFK:D/"NIY
 - b> W:/PAXIYM +FM:NW. L:/RAG:LFY
- 2) God knows: 23 W:/)AT.FH Y:HWFH YFDA(:T.F)ET-K.FL-(:ACFT/FM (FL/AY LA/M.FWET
- 3) imprecation (spiritual judgment, ending with temporal p)
 - a>)AL-T.:KAP."R (AL-(:AWON/FM
 - b> W:/XA+.F)T/FM MI/L.:/PFNEY/KF)AL-T.EM:XIY
 - c> {W:/HFYW.} [W:/YIH:YW.] MUK:\$FLIYM L:/PFNEY/KF
 - d> B.:/("T)AP./:KF (:A&"H B/FHEM S